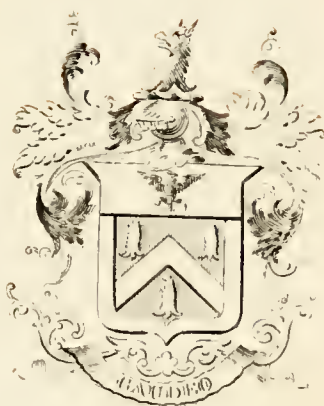
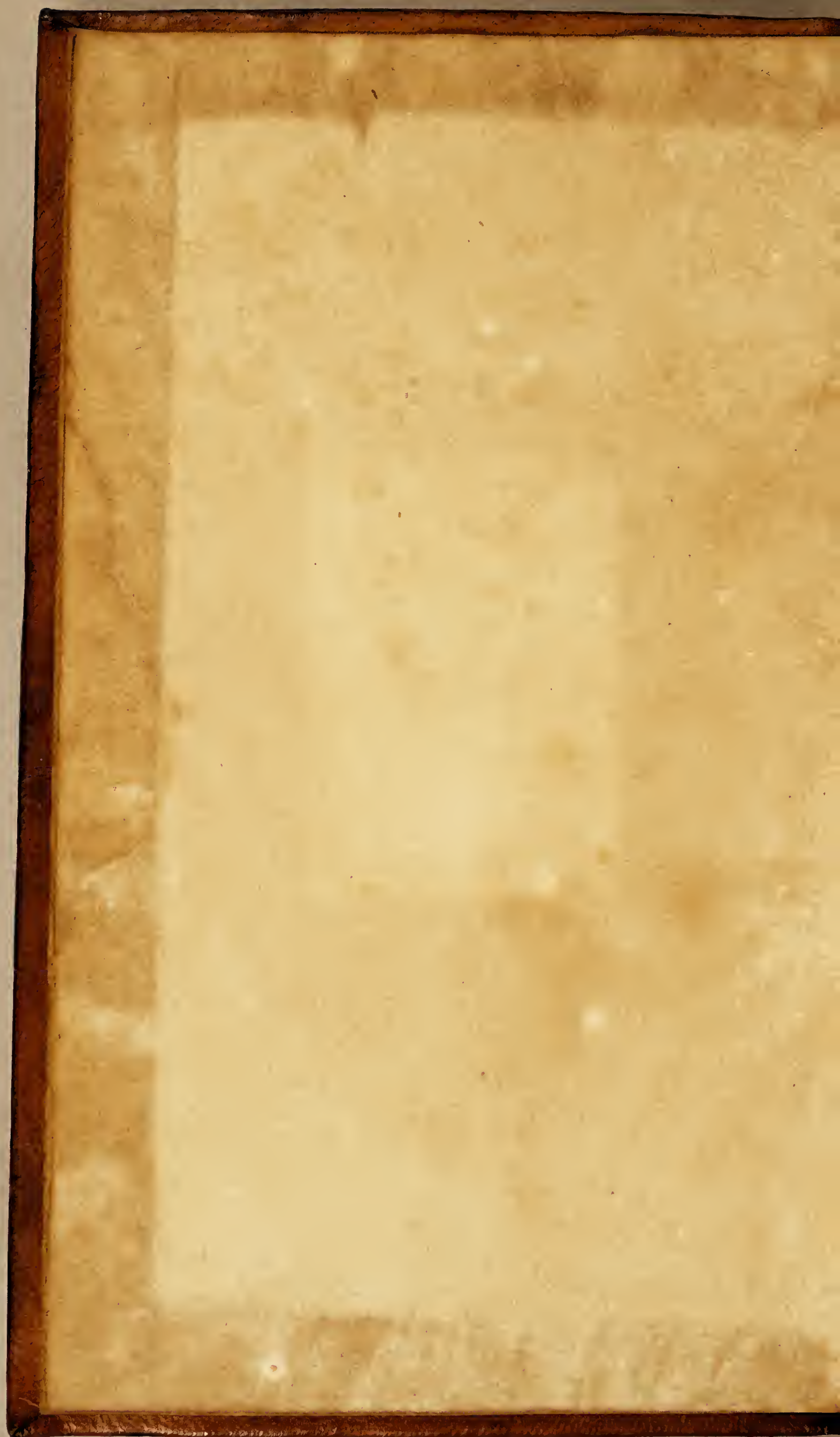


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HISTORY

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OF THE

Corruptions of Christianity,

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY

Joseph Priestley, LL.D. F. R. S.

THE THIRD EDITION.

Didst thou not sow good seed in thy field?—Whence
then hath it tares?— *Matt. xiii. 27.*

VOL. II.

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THE
HISTORY
OF THE
Corruptions of Christianity.

PART VI.

The History of Opinions relating to the LORD'S SUPPER.

THE INTRODUCTION.

THERE is nothing in the whole history that I have undertaken to write, so extraordinary as the abuses that have been introduced into the rite of the *Lord's supper*. Nothing can be imagined more simple in its original institution, or less liable to misapprehension or abuse; and yet, in no instance whatever, has the depravation of the original doctrine and custom proceeded to a greater height, or had more serious consequences.

In allusion, perhaps, to the festival of the passover, our Lord appointed his disciples to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of him; informing them that the bread represented his body, which was about to be broken, and the wine his blood, which was about to be shed for them; and we are informed by the apostle Paul, that this rite is to continue in the christian church till our Lord's second coming. Farther than this we are not informed in the New Testament. We only find that the custom was certainly kept up, and that the christians of the primitive times probably concluded the public worship of every Lord's day, with the celebration of it. As the rite was peculiar to christians, the celebration of it, was of course, in common with joining habitually in the public worship of christians, an open declaration of a man's being a

christian, and more so indeed, than any other visible circumstance ; because other persons might occasionally attend the public worship of christians, without bearing any proper part in it themselves.

Let us now see what *additions* have been made to this simple institution, in several periods, from the primitive times to our own. And for this purpose it will be most convenient to divide the whole history into four parts ; the first from the age of the apostles to that of Austin, including his time, and that of the great men who were his cotemporaries ; the second extending from that period, to the time of Paschasius ; the third, from him to the reformation ; and the fourth, from that time to the present.

In writing the history of this subject, in each of the periods, I shall first note the changes of opinion with respect to the Lord's supper itself, together with the change of language which took place in consequence of it. I shall then give an account of the superstitious practices that were grounded on those opinions ; and lastly, I shall relate what particulars I have met with relating to the manner of celebration.

SECTION I.

The History of the Eucharist till the Time of Austin.

THE first new idea which was superadded to the original notion of the Lord's supper, was that of its being a *sacrament*, or an oath to be true to a leader. For the word *sacrament* is not to be found in the scriptures, but was afterwards borrowed from the Latin tongue, in which it signifieth the oath which a Roman soldier took to his general. Thus, in the first century, Pliny reports, that the christians were wont to meet together before it was light, and to bind themselves by a sacrament. This I would observe, is but a small deviation from the original idea of the Lord's

supper; and though it be not the same with the true idea of it; as before explained, yet it cannot be said to be *contrary* to it. Afterwards the word sacrament came to be used by christian writers in a very loose manner, for every thing that was looked upon to be solemn or mysterious; and indeed, as bishop Hoadley observes, for almost every thing relating to religion.

The next idea which was added to the primitive notion of the Lord's supper was of a much more alarming nature, and had a long train of the worst consequences. This was the considering of this institution as a *mystery*. And, indeed, the christians affected very early to call this rite, one of the *mysteries of our holy religion*. By the term *mystery* was meant, originally, the more secret parts of the heathen worship, to which select persons only were admitted, and those under an oath of secrecy. Those mysteries were also called *initiations*; those who were initiated were supposed to be pure and holy, while those who were not initiated were considered as impure and profane; and by these mysteries the heathens were more attached to their religion than by any other circumstance whatever. This made the first christians (many of whom were first converted from heathenism, and who could not all at once divest themselves of their fondness for pomp and mystery) wish to have something of this nature, which was so striking and captivating, in the christian religion; and the rite of the Lord's supper soon struck them, as what might easily answer this purpose.

When this new idea was introduced, they, in consequence of it, began to exclude all who did not partake of the ordinance, from being present at the celebration of it. Those who did not communicate, were not even allowed to know the method and manner in which it was administered. Tertullian, who wrote at the end of the second century, seems to allude to this practice. "Pious initiations," says he*, "drive away the profane, and it is of the very nature of mysteries to be concealed, as those of Ceres in Samothrace," but as he is there defending the christians

* Apol. cap. vii. Opera, p. 8.

from the charge of practising abominable rites in secret, he may only mean that, on the supposition of such practices, no person could reveal them, their enemies not being present, and they would hardly do it themselves. Indeed, it is most probable that this custom of concealing the mysteries did not take place till the middle of the third century *. After this time, the council of Alexandria reproached the Arians with displaying the holy mysteries before the catechumens, and even the pagans, whereas "that which is holy," they say, "should not be cast to the dogs, nor pearls before swine †." In the fourth century it was usual to call the eucharist a *tremendous mystery*, a *dreadful solemnity*, and *terrible to angels*.

Another new idea annexed to the eucharist was that of its being a *sacrifice*; and this too was in compliance with the prejudices of the Jews and heathens, who in the early ages used to reproach the christians with having no sacrifices or oblations in their religion. We soon find, however, that this language was adopted by them, and applied to the Lord's supper. This language is particularly used by Cyprian, and in general the Lord's supper was called the *eucharistical sacrifice*, though, in fact, they only considered it as a *memorial* of the sacrifice of Christ, or of his death upon the cross.

It is evident, from the nature of the thing, that neither baptism nor the Lord's supper operate as a charm, or produce any immediate effect upon the mind, besides impressing it with proper sentiments and affections, such as become christians, and such as are naturally excited by the use of these symbols. But we find, in very early ages, that both baptism and the Lord's supper were imagined to operate in a different and more direct method, so that the use of them was supposed to depend upon the mere act of administration. Both Justin Martyr and Irenæus thought that where was such a sanctification of the elements that there was a *divine virtue* in them.

This idea of there being a real virtue in the elements of bread and wine, after they were consecrated, or set apart for this particular purpose, opened a door to

* Larroche, p. 125.

† Saur, A. D. 333.

endless superstitions, and some of a very dangerous kind; as christians were led by it to put these merely external rites in the place of moral virtue, which alone has the power of sanctifying the heart, and making men acceptable in the sight of God. After this we are not surprised to find (and it appears as early as the second century) that both baptism and the Lord's supper were thought to be *necessary to salvation*.

It is too early to look for the notion of the transmutation of the bread and wine into the real body and blood of Christ, but we find even in this early age language so highly figurative (calling the symbols by the name of the things represented by them) as very much contributed to produce this opinion in after ages. It was the custom with the early Fathers to say that the bread and wine *passed* into the body and blood of Christ, and even that they are *transfemented* into them. They also use other expressions to the same purpose; meaning, however, by them, nothing more than that a divine virtue was communicated to them*.

"We do not consider," says Justin Martyr †, "this bread and wine as common bread and wine. For, as Jesus Christ was made flesh, and had flesh and blood to procure our salvation, so we learn that this aliment, over which prayers have been made, is changed, and that by which our flesh and blood are nourished is the body and blood of Jesus Christ. For the evangelists teach us that Jesus Christ took bread, and said *this is my body*. He also took the wine and said, *this is my blood*." Tertullian, however, says ‡, that by the words, *this is my body*, we are to understand the *figure* of my body.

The language of Cyril of Jerusalem on this subject is peculiarly strong, and might very well mislead his hearers, whatever ideas he himself might annex to it. He says to the young communicants §, "Since Christ has said, *this is my body*, who can deny it? Since he has said, *this is my blood*, who can say it is not so?"

* Larroche, p. 221. † Edit. Thirlby, p. 96.

‡ Opera, p. 408. § Cat. 4ta. p. 292.

“ He formerly changed water into wine, and is he not
 “ worthy to be believed, when he says that he has
 “ changed the wine into his blood? Wherefore let us,
 “ with full assurance of faith take the body and blood
 “ of Christ. For under the form of bread the body is
 “ given to them, and under the form of wine his
 “ blood.” He then tells his pupils they must not judge
 of this by their senses, but by faith.

This writer carried his idea of the sanctity of the consecrated elements so far, as not to allow that they ever went into the *excrements* of the body; maintaining that they entered wholly into the substance of the communicants; and Chrysostom supported this opinion, by the comparison of *wax*, which is consumed in the fire, without leaving ashes or foot *. This was going very far indeed for so early an age.

About two hundred years after Christ, christians applied their thoughts very much to the giving of mystical significations to the sacraments, as they were also fond of mystical interpretations of scripture. Among other allusions, a happy one enough was this, that the sacramental bread, being composed of many grains of wheat, and the wine being made of many grapes, represented the body of the christian church, which was composed of many believers, united into one society. Cyprian was the first who advanced that by the *wine* was meant the blood of Christ, and by the water (which they always at that time used to mix with the wine) the *christian people*; and that by the *mixture* of them the union between Christ and his people was represented. This idea continued a long time in the church. But some supposed that this *water and wine* were a memorial of the *water and blood*, which issued from the side of Christ, when he was pierced with the spear, as he hung on the cross †.

It was a natural consequence, of this superstitious respect for the eucharistical elements, that many persons began to be afraid of communicating. Accordingly we find that, whereas originally, all christians who

* Basnage, Histoire des Eglises Reformées, vol. i. p. 135.

† Larroche, p. 5.

were baptized, and not under sentence of excommunication, received the Lord's supper, yet in the time of Chrysostom so many abstained from this part of the service, that he was obliged to reprove them for it with great severity; and various methods were taken to engage them to attend it.

When the bread was called the body of Christ, the *cloth* which covered it was usually called *the cloth of the body*, and was considered as entitled to some particular respect. And we find that Optatus reproached the Donatists, that they had taken away these body-cloths, and that they had washed them, as if they had been dirty. Also Victor of Vita, complained that Proculus (the executioner of the cruelties of Genseric, king of the Vandals against the catholics) had made shirts and drawers of them. This body cloth was to be of very fine linen, and not of silk, or of purple, nor of any coloured stuff, agreeable to an order made by pope Silvester, or, as some say, pope Eusebius. Jerom treating of the eucharist calls the table on which it was celebrated *a mystical table*, whose very utensils and sacred coverings were not to be considered as things inanimate, and void of sense, or to have no sanctity, but to be worshipped with the same majesty as the body and blood of our Lord *.

In the fourth century the Lord's supper was celebrated sometimes at the tombs of the martyrs, and at funerals; which custom gave rise to the masses which were afterwards performed in honour of the saints, and for the dead. Also, in many places, about the same time, the bread and wine were held up to the view of the people, before they were distributed, that they might be seen and contemplated with religious respect; from which the adoration of the symbols was afterwards derived.

Towards the end of the fourth century it was thought wrong to commit the blood of Christ to so frail a thing as *glass*. Jerom reproaches a bishop of Thoulouse with this; he being a rich man, and able to

* Middleton's Introductory Discourse, p. 60.

afford a better vessel, and more proper for the purpose *.

As the primitive christians considered their joint-partaking of the Lord's supper as a bond of union among themselves, it was natural to send part of the elements to those persons whose infirm state of health, or necessary avocations, would not allow them to be present. For the same reason consecrated bread was also sent to the neighbouring, and often to distant parishes, as a token of brotherly communion. This they did, particularly at the feast of Easter; and provided no superstitious use had been made of it, there seems to have been little to complain of in the custom. However, the council of Laodicea thought proper to forbid this sending out of the elements, as a custom borrowed from the Jews and the heretics. But pope Innocent, who lived a century after, still continued to send the consecrated bread to the neighbouring parishes †.

But the greatest abuse that was made of this custom was in consequence of the consecrated elements being thought to be of use to the sick, in a medicinal way, and to be a means of preserving persons in journies, and upon voyages; and as persons might not always have carried home with them enough for these uses, it was the custom for the priests to keep a quantity of the consecrated bread to distribute occasionally, as it might be wanted. Austin says, "If any one fall sick, let them receive the body and blood of Christ, and let him keep a part of this little body, that he may find the accomplishment of what St. James says, *Let those who are sick go to the church to receive strength of body* ‡." This same Father also mentions a woman who had made a plaister of the sacramental bread for a sore eye §.

Some of the ancient christians used to bury the sacramental bread together with the dead; thinking, no doubt, that it would be of as much use to them in that long journey, as it had been in other shorter ones.

* Larroche, p. 53.

† Basnage, vol. i. p. 111.

‡ Ibid. p. 161.

§ Larroche, p. 6.

However, in a council held at Carthage in 419, this practice was condemned; but it appears that the custom was not wholly laid aside at the end of the eighth century, though it had been prohibited again by the sixth general council in 691. The reason was, that to bury these sacred elements was now thought to be a profanation of them; so that a custom which took its rise from one degree of superstition, was abolished by a greater degree of it; and of this we shall have other instances in the course of this history.

Having thus noted the changes in the doctrine of the eucharist, and the superstitious practices which in these early times were derived from the erroneous opinions of christians on the subject, I shall now relate what I have been able to collect concerning the manner in which it was administered.

In the first place it cannot be denied that in the primitive times, all those who were classed among the *faithful* received the eucharist every Lord's day. After reading the scriptures, and the exposition of them, or the sermon, at which others might attend, they proceeded to the public prayer, in which the audience bore their part, at least by saying occasionally, *Amen*, and the service constantly closed with the celebration of the eucharist. We even find that young children, and indeed infants, communicated. This was clearly the case in the time of Cyprian. The custom continued in the western church till near the time of the reformation, and it is still the practice of the eastern churches, and of every other part of the christian world that was never subject to the see of Rome.

The different classes of christians in the primitive times as they respected the Lord's supper, were as follows. There were four orders of the catechumens. The first were instructed at their own houses, the second heard the exposition in the church, the third attended the public prayer, and the fourth were those who were completely ready for baptism, for till that time they did not attend the celebration of the eucharist, but were formally dismissed at what is called *Missa Cate-*

chumenorum, as the final dismissal of the assembly was called *Missa Fidelium* *.

The primitive christians communicated after supper, but the custom of celebrating it in the morning, was frequent in the church in the time of Tertullian, in consequence, no doubt, of a superstitious reverence for the elements, which led them to think that it was wrong to eat any thing before they partook of them, but it was still usual to communicate in the evening on Holy Thursday. Chrysostom being charged with giving the eucharist to some persons after a repast, said, "If I have done it, let my name be blotted from the catalogue of bishops, and let me not be reckoned among the orthodox †.

It having been customary with the Jews whenever they made a solemn appearance before God, to bring some oblations; these christians whenever they assembled for public worship (which they also considered as an appearing before God, and especially in the more solemn part of the service, the administration of the eucharist) brought with them a quantity of bread and wine, and especially the first-fruits of their corn and grapes. Of these *offerings* or *oblations*, as they then affected to call them, a part was reserved for the eucharist, and a part also was eaten afterwards in common, in what they called their *Agapes*, or love feast, but the remainder was appropriated to the maintenance of the ministers, and of the poor. Besides bread and wine, it was the custom to offer many other things of value at the same time. But at length they limited the oblations which were made on this particular occasion to bread and wine only; and afterwards they usually made for this purpose *one great loaf*, or cake, which they said represented the unity of the church, and which was broken in public, and distributed to as many as communicated. In the fourth century some churches substituted what they called *eulogies*, or *holy bread*, for the bread of the Lord's supper. ‡

The ancients in general believed that the water was

* Sucer, A. D. 216. † Basnage, vol. i. p. 132.

‡ Basnage, vol. i. p. 112.

mixed with the wine in our Saviour's own administration of the eucharist, and therefore they did the same. This mixture of water with the wine is mentioned by Tertullian, and Cyprian pretends that it was of singular use. We find some christians communicated with water only, from which they were called Aquarians. These were not only Manicheans, who abhorred wine, but also others who were in the scheme of mortifying the flesh by abstaining from marriage, and the use of flesh meat, as well as of wine.

When the elements began to be considered in a superstitious light, as something more than mere bread and wine, there must have been a time when they imagined that this change took place; and in the early ages it was supposed to be made by the *prayer* which preceded the administration, and not by any particular form of words; and this is the idea that the Greek church still retains concerning consecration. But afterwards, though it is not easy to determine when, the change was supposed to take place as the priest was pronouncing the words *This is my body* in Latin, *hoc est corpus meum*; as if there had been some peculiar virtue in the sound of those words, when pronounced by a person duly qualified to use them. Thus also the heathens imagined that the presence of the invisible divinity was made to dwell in an image by the priest pronouncing some form of words, which was termed *consecrating* them.

The eucharistical elements being now considered as something *holy*, it was natural to suppose that a degree of holiness belonged also to the table on which the service was performed, and therefore that it ought to be prepared by some ceremony, for this holy purpose. Gregory Nyssen, the same whose eloquence on the subject of the eucharist has been recited already, is said to have been the first who performed any ceremony of this kind. It was about the fourth century, as is generally agreed, that places of worship began to be consecrated, though in some very simple manner, and it was then forbidden to celebrate the Lord's supper except in consecrated places. When churches were built with more magnificence, under Constantine,

there was a particular place called the *sanctuary*, where the table or altar stood.

Lights in the day-time were usual in many ceremonies in the heathen religion, whence an idea of *cheerfulness* and of *sacredness* also, was annexed to them, and the christians of those ages, were but too ready to adopt the religious customs of the heathens, partly from their own attachment to them, and also with a view to make their religion more inviting to the pagans. The custom of using wax-lights at the eucharist, in particular, probably began in the time of Austin, in the fifth century. For, in the time of Gregory I. they were used at baptism; and Isidore of Seville, who was cotemporary with Gregory, speaks of it as a thing established. "Those," says he "who in Greek are called *Acolytes*, are in Latin called *link bearers*, because they carry the lights when the gospel is read; or, when the sacrifice is offered not to dissipate darkness, but to express joy, to declare, under the type of corporeal light, the light spoken of in the gospel." In blessing these torches and flambeaus, they said, "O Jesus Christ bless this wax, we beseech thee, that it may receive of thee such a power and benediction, that, in all places where it shall be lighted and set, the devil may tremble and fly for fear, and may no more attempt to molest or seduce those who serve thee*." It must be observed that this custom of using lights at the celebration of the eucharist began in the East a little after the time of Gregory Nazianzen.

The blessing of the bread and wine used by our Saviour himself was probably nothing more than a very short prayer, such as we commonly use before meat. But when the administration of the eucharist came to be a principal part of solemn religious worship, it is probable that the prayer which preceded it, and from which the whole service got the name of *Eucharist* was of some length, especially as we do not find that prayer was used in any other part of the service. In the third century it is particularly observed, that the prayers which preceded the celebration of the eucharist

* Larroche, p. 537.

were considerably lengthened, as well as that the solemnity and pomp with which it was administered were increased; and that at this time persons in a state of penitence, and others, were excluded from it, in imitation of the heathen mysteries.

It was the custom within this period to ask forgiveness of one another, as well as to give the *kiss of peace*, or charity, before communion, the men kissing the men, and the women the women. They also used to kiss the hand of the priest. This custom of asking pardon before communicating was used in France in the 11th century*.

At first the deacons generally administered the elements, but in the fourth council of Carthage, they were only suffered to administer in cases of necessity. Afterwards they administered the cup only, while the priest who celebrated gave the bread. Sometimes women served on this occasion, and though it was forbidden by pope Gelasius, the practice continued in many places till the tenth century.†

Cyril of Jerusalem, at the end of the fourth century exhorted his communicants to receive the bread by supporting the right hand with the left, also to receive it in the hollow of the hand, and to take care that no crumb of it fell to the ground; and that in receiving the wine, they should approach it with the body a little bowed, in a token of veneration. The sixth general council, ordered that the hand should be held in the form of a cross. It was the custom in the time of Jerom, to kiss the bread; and in the liturgy of Chrysostom, used by the Greeks, it is directed that he who receives the elements should kiss the hand of the deacon from whom he receives them‡. It is needless to note the progress of superstition in all these observances.

When the service was ended, the congregation was dismissed by the priest, saying *Ite, Missa est*; which Polidore Virgil acknowledges was also the form of dismissing the idolatrous services of the pagans§. There was likewise, as was observed before, a formal dismiss-

* Larroche, p. 120. † Ib. p. 123. ‡ Ib. p. 119.
§ Sueur, A. D. p. 398.

sion of the catechumens, before they proceeded to the celebration of the eucharist, in the same words, and from this term *missa* the whole service came afterwards to be called by that name, which by corruption is in the English language *mass*.

The primitive christians did frequently eat in common, before the celebration of the Lord's supper. To this kind of entertainment, to which every person brought what he thought proper, they gave the name of *Agape*, or *love-feast*; and it is thought to be alluded to in the epistles of Peter and Jude, 2 Pet. ii. 13. Jude. 12. This custom, however, of eating in common having been abused, it was forbidden by the council of Laodicea in 360. But before this time, when it began to be thought improper to eat any thing before the eucharist, this feast was omitted till after the celebration *.

Such was the progress of superstition in this age of the church, which abounded with men of learning and writers. We are not to expect a reformation of these abuses, in the next period of gross darkness, and while the same causes of corruption, and especially a fondness for pagan customs, and a willingness to gain over the pagans by adopting them, continued and increased. We have now seen how the pagan notion of *mysteries*, together with that of a *sanctifying power* in the elements themselves, contributed to introduce a train of superstitious practices into the christian church; but we must go much deeper into this superstition in the two following periods, with less pleasing prospects than in the last. We have seen the shades of the evening close upon us; we must now prepare to pass through the darkness of the night, but with the hope that, as we come nearer to our own times, the day-light will visit us again.

* Mosheim vol. i. p. 104.

SECTION II.

The History of the Eucharist from the Time of Austin to that of Paschasius.

IN this period we find a very considerable advance towards the doctrine of *transubstantiation*, which was afterwards established in the western church; but the first great step towards it, as well as almost all the abuses of which an account is given in the last section, was made in the East, where Anastasius, a monk of Mount Sinai (in a treatise against some heretics who asserted that the body of Christ was impassible) said the elements of the Lord's supper were the true body and blood of Christ; for that when Christ instituted the eucharist he did not say, this is the *type* or *antitype* of my body, but *my body*. This is evidently a language unknown to all the ancients, when they spoke not rhetorically but gravely on this subject; and yet, on the whole, it is certain that he did not mean so much as was afterwards understood by that mode of speaking *.

But John Damascenus, another monk, and a celebrated writer in the East, not only followed Anastasius in his language, but made a real change in the *ideas* annexed to it; saying that, "when some have called the bread and wine *figures* or *signs* of the body and blood of Christ, as Basil, they spake of them not after consecration, but before the oblation was consecrated." "Jesus," he says, "has joined to the bread and wine his own divinity, and made them to be his body and blood." He illustrates this in the following manner. "Isaiah saw a *lighted coal*; now a lighted coal is not mere wood, but wood joined to fire; so the bread of the sacrament is not mere bread, but bread joined to the divinity, and the body united to the divinity is not one and the same nature, but the nature of the body is one, and that

* Suceur, A. D. 637.

“ of the divinity united to it another *.” In the second council of Nice, when it was urged on one side that Christ had no other image than the sacrament, it was argued by the council, that the sacrament after consecration was no image, but properly his body and blood †. This has been the faith of the Greek church ever since the time of this Damascenus, who wrote in the beginning of the eighth century ; and his name is as great an authority in the eastern church, as that of Thomas Aquinas was afterwards in the western.

In reality, the Greeks must consider the eucharistical elements as *another body of Christ*, to which his soul, or his divinity, bears the same relation that it did to the body which he had when on earth, and with which he ascended to heaven. They must suppose that there is, as it were, a multiplication of bodies to the same soul. No real change, however, is by them supposed to be made in the substance of the bread and wine ; only from being mere bread and wine, it becomes a new body and blood to Christ.

Whether this new opinion spread into the West does not distinctly appear, and the two churches had not, at that time, much communication with each other. But from the same general causes the idea of something mystical and sacred in the eucharistical elements kept advancing in the West, as well as in the East ; and they were considered as bearing some peculiar relation to Christ ; who was, therefore, thought to be, in some extraordinary manner, *present* with them, but in *what manner*, they had not perhaps any distinct idea.

When the eucharistical elements were considered as so peculiarly sacred, we are not surprised to find that many methods were used to prevent the loss, or waste of them. Among other methods, they began, pretty early in this period, to take the bread dipped in the consecrated wine. This was particularly noticed in the 11th council of Toledo in 675, and in another at Braga in Gallicia, in which a decree was made to put a stop to this practice ; but still it was allowed that the eucharist might be administered to sick persons and

* Larroche, p. 367.

† Taylor on the Grand Apostacy, p. 160.

relating to the Lord's Supper.

young children in this manner. The Armenians still receive the eucharist in this way, and the Moscovite take the bread and wine together in a spoon *.

I have observed that in the former period, it was usual for the communicants to carry some of the consecrated bread home with them, and to take it with them when they went on a journey; but in the council of Saragossa, within the present period, they were did not eat the bread at the time of communion were anathematized. Thus a greater degree of superstition put an end to a practice which had been introduced by a less degree of it. However, the practice of consecrating a great quantity of bread was kept up; and in the time of Charlemagne express directions were given for keeping it, in order to communicate the sick †. This consecrated bread, it had been the custom to keep in a close chest, in the church; but at a council of Tours, in 567, it was ordained that the *host* (as it was then called) should be kept not in a chest, but under the title of the cross, to excite the devotion of the people ‡.

Among other superstitious customs within this period, we find that sometimes the consecrated wine was mixed with ink, in order to sign writings of a peculiarly solemn nature. Thus pope Theodore, in the seventh century, signed the condemnation and deposition of Pyrrhus the Monothelite; it was used at the condemnation of Photius by the Fathers of the council of Constantinople in 869; and Charles the bald, and Bernard count of Barcelona also signed a treaty with the sacramental wine in 844. It is evident, however, from this very abuse of the eucharistical elements, that they were not at that time supposed to be the real body and blood of Christ; for, since they have been thought to be so, it would be deemed a great profanation to make any such use of them.

It is not denied that, originally, the celebration of the Lord's supper was a part of the public worship, in which all the congregation of the faithful joined; but in the church of Rome at present the priest alone communicates in general, while the congregation are mere

* Laffroche, p. 146. † Ib. p. 167. ‡ Sueton, A. D. 567.

spectators of what is doing, and only join in the prayers. This was occasioned by the superstitious veneration for the elements, from which was naturally derived an idea of some particular preparation being necessary for the receiving of them. The first notice that we find of this kind of *mass* was about the year 700; but we have seen that, even in the time of Chrysostom, the people in general began to decline communion; but in the time of Charlemagne the priests were forbidden to celebrate mass alone; and pope Soter ordained that no person should celebrate mass, unless the priest made a third*. Among other accusations of John XII. he was charged with celebrating mass without communion†.

No laws, however, could long check the torrent of this abuse. It being imagined that the celebration of the mass was offering the most acceptable sacrifice to God, which would avail for the pardon of sin, and for redeeming souls out of purgatory, large sums of money were given and bequeathed to the priests for this purpose, which proved a source of immense wealth to them. But this abuse was much increased when monks were allowed by pope Gregory to do the office of priests. This order of men had much leisure for the purpose, and an idea of peculiar sanctity was annexed to their character in the minds of the common people.

To the monks may be attributed the origin of *private chapels*, and the multiplication of altars in churches for celebrating several masses at the same time. For, according to ancient custom, it was not lawful to say more than one mass, at which all assisted; and it was a thing unheard of that any person should celebrate mass more than once on the same day, upon the same altar, a custom which is still observed in the eastern churches. For the Greeks have but one altar in one church, nor do we find the mention of any more in the western church till the eighth century. But in the time of Adrian the first, who lived towards the end of the eighth century, there is mention made of the *great altar* to distinguish it from others in the same church. When-

* Larroche, p. 126. † Sueton, A. D. 963.

ever the phrase occurs in any period prior to this, by *altars* we are to understand the *tombs of the martyrs*, which are often so called *. The first mention that we have of the eucharist being celebrated more than once in the course of the same day, in any church, is in the fifth century, when Leo the first ordered it on great festival days, when the crowds were so great that the churches could not contain those that resorted to them.

To induce the common people to continue their offerings after they ceased to communicate, they were given to understand, that provided they kept up that custom, the service would still be useful to them; and instead of a real communion with bread and wine duly consecrated, the priests gave them a kind of substitute for it, and a thing of a much less awful nature, viz. bread, over which they prayed, and to which they gave the name of *hallowed bread*. This was about the year 700 †.

It was in consequence of few persons offering themselves to communion, that the priests got a habit of speaking in a very low voice, a custom which was afterwards continued through superstition. This is said to have begun about the end of the tenth century; and some say that it proceeded from a report that God had punished with sudden death some shepherds, who sung the words of consecration in the fields ‡.

Having noted these general abuses, respecting the eucharist, I shall now consider the method in which it was administered, going over the different parts of the service for that purpose; and we shall find traces enough of superstition every step we take.

As there is nothing prescribed in the New Testament concerning the order of public worship, or the mode of celebrating the Lord's supper, different churches fell naturally into different methods with respect to them, as we see in what remains of several of the ancient liturgies. That of most churches had probably been gradually altered, especially as mens ideas with

* Larroche, p. 47.

† Hist. of Ancient Ceremonies, p. 88.
‡ Larroche, p. 79.

respect to the nature of the service itself had changed. The present *canon of the mass*, as it is now used in the church of Rome, was, for the most part, composed by Gregory the Great, who made more alterations in it than any of his predecessors. He introduced into it many pompous ceremonies, but it was several centuries before this canon was adopted by all the members of the Latin church. In 699, pope Sergius added to the canon of the mass, that while the priest is breaking the bread, he should sing three times *Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us*; but that at the third time, instead of the words *have mercy upon us*, he should say, *grant us peace* *.

Since the celebration of the eucharist was now considered as a *proper sacrifice*, the table on which it was offered came of course to be an *altar*; and as altars in the Jewish church, and among the pagans, were consecrated, the christian altars must be so too. The first mention that is made of the consecration of altars (more than was observed to have been done by Gregory Nyssenus) is in the council of Agde in 506, when they were ordered to be consecrated both by chrism and by the benediction of the priest. In the ninth century they added water to the chrism, and incense, and other things. They also consecrated *three table cloths* of several fashions, and a kind of *veil* of several colours, according to the different days, &c. †

In order to be better entitled to the name of *altars*, and to correspond to the altars in the Jewish and pagan religions, all the wooden tables were removed, and all altars were ordered to be made of stone. And it was farther alleged in favour of this custom, that Jesus Christ is called *the corner stone*, and foundation of the church. This institution is ascribed to Silvester; but the decree is not found. It was a council of Epaone in 517, that forbade the consecration of altars, unless they were made of stone ‡.

To the due consecration of altars, it is now requisite that there should be relics in them; but this was far from being the case originally. For a council in the

* Sueur.

† Larroche, p. 49.

‡ Basnage, vol. i. p. 47.

seventh century ordered that altars should not be consecrated in any place where a body had been interred *. The last thing which I shall observe in respect to altars is, that Bede is the first who makes any mention of portable ones.

It was a custom in all this period not only to make use of *lights*, though in the day time, during the celebration of the eucharist, but of *incense* also; and both these appendages were borrowed from the heathen sacrifices, and were first adopted by the Greeks, and so early as the middle of the fifth century; mention being then made of assembling the church by flambeaus and perfumes. But it is not said that this was for the celebration of the eucharist in particular †.

Originally, the *bread* that was used for the celebration of the Lord's supper, was such as was presented among other offerings on the occasion. Afterwards it was the custom to make one great loaf or cake, to supply all the communicants; and this was broken at the time of the celebration, and distributed in small pieces to the communicants. But this custom being attended with some loss, some priests in Spain began about the seventh century, to prepare the eucharistical bread in a different manner, baking small round pieces on purpose that there might not be occasion to break it at all. But this innovation was not generally approved, and it was expressly forbidden by the council of Toledo in 693 ‡. In time, however, the increasing superstition of the age got the better of this regulation, and the custom of making small round *wafers* for the purpose of communion at length became universal in the church.

It was the custom in the primitive church, as I have already observed, to give what is called the *kiss of peace*, or of charity, immediately before communion. This, in time, was thought to be an indecent practice, and therefore ought to have been laid aside altogether. However, Leo III. at the end of the ninth century, changed this custom for that of kissing a plate of silver or copper, with the figure of a cross upon it, or the

* Basnage, p. 48; † Larroche, p. 526. ‡ Ib. p. 35.

relic of some saint after the consecration of the elements *.

In the fifth century, it was the custom for men to receive the bread with their naked hands, and the women (who perhaps did not expose their hands naked) in a clean cloth, which obtained the name of *Dominica*. Afterwards, in the farther progress of superstition, it came to be the custom to receive it in vessels of gold, &c. but this was forbidden in the sixth general council in 680, and they were again ordered to receive it with the hand. It has been already observed that *glass* was thought to be too brittle a thing to receive the holy elements. Glass vessels, however, continued to be made use of, so that it was thought necessary to forbid the use of them in a council held at Rheims under Charlemagne; and in another council, held in the year 895, wooden vessels were forbidden to be used for that purpose; and at present the Latin church does not suffer the consecration to be made in any thing but in a chalice of gold, or silver, or at least of pewter; and a council held at Albi, in 1254, commands all churches, the yearly rent of which amounts to fifteen French livres, to have a silver chalice †.

In the primitive times we find no mention made of any particular *position of the body*, as more proper than any other for receiving the Lord's supper; but as superstition kept gaining ground, the *East* began to be held peculiarly sacred, as it always had been held by the heathens, who worshipped with their faces turned that way; and about the year 536, Pope Vigilius ordered that those who celebrated mass should always direct their faces towards the East ‡.

We see the effects of superstition as well in the method of disposing of what remained of the consecrated elements, as in the use of them. Some churches used to burn all that remained after communion. This was the custom at Jerusalem, and it is so with the Greeks at present; at least, says Fleury §, they are reproached with it. At Constantinople it was formerly eaten by young scholars, sent from the school for that pur-

* Hist. of Ancient Ceremonies, p. 90.

† Hist. of Ancient Ceremonies, p. 76.

‡ Larroche, p. 52.

§ A D. 1054.

pose, as is related by Evagrius, who wrote at the end of the sixth century. The council of Toledo, in 693, left it to the liberty of each particular church, either to keep what remained of the consecrated elements, or to eat it; but in the latter case, it was ordained that the quantity consecrated should be moderate, that it might not oppress the stomachs of those who were appointed to take it. But, in whatever manner they disposed of these sacred elements, it was the custom not to leave any of them till the next day *.

One would imagine that we had seen superstition enough in this one article of christian faith and practice within this period; but we shall find much greater abuses in the next; and notwithstanding the greater light of the present age, they continue unreformed in the church of Rome to this day.

SECTION III.

The History of the Eucharist, from the Time of Paschasius to the Reformation.

WE are now arrived to the most distinguished æra in the history of the eucharist; after having seen how much the eucharistical elements in this age of darkness had gained in point of *sacredness* and *solemnity*, and how awful a thing the act of communicating was generally apprehended to be; so that commonly the priest alone communicated, and the people very seldom, except at the time of the greater festivals, and especially at Easter.

This was in consequence of the people in general being impressed with a confused notion that the eucharistical elements were, in some sense or other, *the body and blood of Christ*, and therefore that Christ himself was *present* in them. But in what manner he was

* Larroche, p. 171.

present they seem to have had no clear idea. This general notion, however, paved the way for the capital addition that was made to the doctrine of the eucharist by Paschasius Radbert, a monk of Corbie in France, who undertook to explain the manner in which the body of Christ is present in the eucharist,

This he did in a treatise published in the year 818, in which he maintained that not only the bread and wine were changed by consecration, into the real body and blood of Christ; but that it was the same body that had been born of the virgin Mary, and that had been crucified and raised from the dead. It was in support of this opinion that he wrote the two books *on the Delivery of the Virgin Mary*, which I had occasion to mention before; in which he maintained, that it was performed in a miraculous manner, without any opening of the womb*.

This opinion Paschasius himself seems to have been sensible was bold and *novel*. For the first time that he mentions it, after calling the eucharistical elements the body of Christ in general, he adds, “and to say something more surprising and wonderful (*Ut mirabilius loquar*) it is no other flesh than that which was born of the virgin Mary, which suffered upon the cross, and which was raised from the grave †.”

Not depending intirely upon the *reasons* which he was able to allege in favour of so extraordinary an opinion, he likewise produced in support of it, what was no uncommon thing with the monks, and what had no small weight with the common people, in that ignorant age, namely an *apparition*, which for its singular curiosity, and as a specimen of the impositions of those times, I shall relate.

A priest whose name was Plecgills officiating at the tomb of St. Ninus, wished, out of love, and not infidelity, to see the body of Jesus Christ; and falling upon his knees, he asked of God the favour to see the nature of the body of Jesus Christ, in this mystery, and to hold in his hands the form of that little child which the virgin had borne in her lap; when an angel cried to him,

* Saur, A. D. 818. † Ibid.

“Get up, quickly, and look at the infant, which that
“holy woman hath carried, for he is clothed in his
“corporeal habit.” The priest declared, that being
quite terrified he looked up, and saw upon the altar the
child that Simeon had held in his arms, that the angel
told him he might not only see but *touch* the child,
and that accordingly he took him and pressed the breast
of the child to his own, and after embracing him fre-
quently, he kissed the God, joining his lips to the lips
of Jesus Christ. After this, he replaced the beautiful
limbs of the God upon the altar, praying to God that
he might resume his former figure, and that he had
scarcely finished his prayer, when rising from the
ground, he found the body of Jesus Christ was restored
to its former figure, as he had requested *.

Notwithstanding this miracle, and every thing else
that Paschasius could allege in favour of his doctrine,
it excited great astonishment, and was opposed by ma-
ny persons of learning and eminence. Among others,
the emperor Charles the Bald was much offended at it,
and by his particular order, the famous Bertram, or
Ratram, wrote against the new opinion of Paschasius,
and at the same time against his particular notion con-
cerning the delivery of the virgin.

In consequence of this, the doctrine of Paschasius,
though published in the ninth century, does not appear
to have gained many advocates till the eleventh, when
it was opposed by Berenger archdeacon of the church of
Angers in France, (whom I mentioned before as one
of the most eminent scholars of his age) and his writ-
ings on this subject made a great impression on the
minds of many; so that though no less than ten or
twelve councils were held on this subject, in all of
which the doctrine of Berenger was condemned, Mat-
thew of Westminster says, that it had infected almost
all France, Italy, and England; and though, when he
was threatened, he was weak enough to sign a recan-
tation of his opinion, he certainly died in the belief of it.
Berenger was followed by Peter and Henry de Bruis,
whose disciples were called *Petrobrussians*, and by the

* Sueton, A. D. 818.

Albigenses in general ; who in the twelfth century separated from the church of Rome. Arnold of Brescia also taught the same doctrine in Italy, and for this, and his declaiming against the church of Rome in general, he was burned at Rome, in 1155*.

It is remarkable that for two centuries the popes did not interfere in the controversy about Paschasius. Most probably they thought with his adversaries ; and as very few joined him at first, and he was openly opposed by the learned men of the age, it seemed as if his opinion would have died away of itself. As soon however, as it was perceived that the doctrine went down with the common people, and that it promised to give a high idea of the dignity and power of the priesthood, the popes were ready enough to enforce it by their decrees, as we have seen in the case of Berenger. It was not, however till the beginning of the thirteenth century, that this doctrine was made an article of faith, viz. by a decree of Innocent III. at the council of Lateran in 1215, the term *transubstantiation* having been first used by Stephen bishop of Autun, in the beginning of the twelfth century.

Even notwithstanding this decree, several divines openly maintained a different opinion, thinking it sufficient to acknowledge the *real presence*, though they explained the manner of it differently from Innocent, and the followers of Paschasius ; and John, surnamed *Pungens Asinus*, a doctor of the university of Paris, substituted the word *consubstantiation* instead of transubstantiation, towards the conclusion of this century †. Others say that he maintained the *assumption* of the consecrated bread by the divinity. However, he did not deny that the substance of the bread and wine remained in the elements ; and yet the faculty at Paris did not condemn his opinion, but declared that both this, and the common doctrine of transubstantiation, were probable ways of making the body of Christ exist in the sacrament.

As the monks had contributed greatly to the establishment of almost every other corruption of christi-

* Larroche, p. 473. † Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 106.

anity, they were no less active in promoting this. Among others, the name of Odo, bishop of Clugni in France, in the tenth century, is mentioned as having been of eminent use on this occasion. Indeed, another Odo, archbishop of Canterbury, of that age, is likewise said to have been a great promoter of it. But there does not appear to have been any public act in favour of the doctrine of transubstantiation in England, before the council of Oxford which condemned Wickliffe.

We cannot be surpris'd, that the circumstance of all the known properties of bread and wine remaining in the eucharistical elements after consecration, should not a little embarrass the advocates for the change of them into real flesh and blood. On this account, Innocent III. acknowledged that, after consecration, there did remain in the elements a certain *paneity* and *vineity*, as he called them, which satisfied hunger and thirst. But afterwards they who maintained that the consecrated host retained the nature of bread, and nourished the body, and especially that any part of it was turned into *excrement*, were, in derision, called *Stercorarists*. This term of reproach shews in what abhorrence all those who did not assent to this new doctrine were then held. If ridicule and contempt were a proper *test of truth*, I doubt not but that those who defended the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation would have had the advantage of the argument. Protestants would now only laugh at being called *Stercorarists*, but at that time the laugh would probably not have been with us, but against us. That was not an age of experiment, or it might have been easily decided, viz. by giving a man nothing but consecrated bread, whether it turned to nourishment and excrement or not; but the very proposal would have been deemed impious; and might have been very hazardous to the proposer.

Considering the great difficulty of forming any conception concerning this conversion of the bread and wine into real flesh and blood, it is no wonder that many doubts should have been started, and different opinions should have been held concerning it; and that they should even continue to be held, notwith-

standing the most authoritative decisions respecting it. Peter Lombard, cotemporary with Stephen of Autun above mentioned, approved of this doctrine of transubstantiation, but could not determine of what *kind* the change was ; whether it was only *formal*, or *substantial*, that is, whether it affected the sensible properties of the elements, or the real substance of them *.

It was also a question whether the *water* (which it was always the custom to mix with the wine before consecration) was changed immediately into the blood of Christ, or whether it was changed into wine first. Paschasius himself had asserted the former, but after long debates it was determined by Innocent III. and the schoolmen supported him in it, that the water is changed into wine before it is changed into the blood of Christ. See Basnage's *Histoire des Eglises Reformées*, vol. iii. p. 681, where this and other difficulties on the same subject are particularly considered. It is sufficient for my purpose to give a specimen of them.

In this, and several other respects, a considerable latitude of opinion was formerly allowed in the church of Rome ; and indeed the doctrine of *transubstantiation* did not properly become an article of faith before it was made to be so by the council of Trent. The cardinal D'Ailli, at the council of Constance, spoke of the doctrine of transubstantiation as an *opinion* only, and said that it could not be clearly inferred from the scriptures, that the substance of bread did not remain in the sacrament †.

At the council of Trent, the Franciscans maintained that the body of Christ descended from heaven, in order to be changed into the form of bread and wine, though it did not quit its former place, whereas the Dominicans said, that Jesus Christ did not come from any other place, but that he was formed in the host, the substance of the bread being changed into that of his body. The council did not decide this question, but in their decrees made use of such terms as both parties might adopt ‡.

When the great difficulty of one single conversion

* Larroche, p. 183. † Ib. p. 492. ‡ Basnage, vol. iii. p. 669.

of any particular quantity of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ was got over, one would imagine that another difficulty, no less insuperable, would have occurred, with respect to the multitude of consecrations performed in different places at the same time. But Guimond, who wrote against Berenger, in 1075, made nothing of these, or of still greater difficulties. "Every separate part," says he, "of the eucharist is the whole body of Christ. It is given entire to all the faithful. They all receive it equally. Though it should be celebrated a thousand times at once, it is the same indivisible body of Christ. It is only to *sense* that a single part of the host appears less than the whole, but our senses often deceive us. It is acknowledged that there is a difficulty in *comprehending* this, but there is no difficulty in *believing* it. The only question is, whether God has been willing to make this change? It is like the voice of a single man, which all the audience hears entire." He exhorts heretics to yield to the truth, because, says he, "we are not now contending for victory, as in the schools, or for any temporal interest, as in the secular courts. In this dispute nothing less is depending than eternal life *."

When it was objected to Guimond, that the rats sometimes eat the consecrated bread, he replied, that either the senses were deceived, or the body of Christ did not suffer any more in the rat, than in the sepulchre, or that the devil put real bread into it on which men and rats might feed†.

The language in which some of the popish priests have boasted of the power which this doctrine of transubstantiation gives them, would excite the greatest ridicule, if there was not a mixture of impiety with the absurdity of it. "On our altars," say some of them, "Jesus Christ obeys all the world. He obeys the priest, let him be where he will, at every hour, at his simple word. They carry him whither they please. He goes into the mouth of the wicked as well as of the righteous. He makes no resistance,

* Fleury.

† Basnage, vol. ii. p. 120.

“ he does not hesitate one moment *.” Some priests boasted that they had even more power than the blessed virgin, because they could create their creator whenever they pleased; whereas she had conceived him but once †.

So much is made to depend on the power and *will* of the priest, with respect to the eucharist and the sacraments in general, in the church of Rome, as, I should think, must occasion a good deal of anxiety on the part of those who receive them. For they believe that the efficacy of all the sacraments depends upon the *intention* of him that administers them. This is expressly determined in a decree of pope Eugenius; and at the council of Trent an anathema was pronounced on those who denied it. This is even carried so far, that in one of the rubrics of the Missal, it is given as a rule, that if the priest who goes to consecrate twelve hosts, should have a general intention to leave out one of them it will affect them all ‡. Luther mentions some priests at Rome, who acknowledged that instead of pronouncing the proper words of consecration, only said to themselves, *Bread thou art, and bread thou shalt remain* §.

All the disputes about the nature of the eucharistical elements were not confined to the western church, in this period; for at the beginning of the thirteenth century the Greeks were much agitated about this subject; some affirming that the *mysteries*, as they called them, were incorruptible, while others maintained that they were not: when Zonaras, a Greek friar, happily found out a middle way, which shewed no less ingenuity than had been displayed on the same subject by many of the monks or schoolmen in the West. The consecrated bread, he said, was the flesh of Christ, as dead, and therefore corruptible; but that after it was eaten, and thereby gone, as it were, into the sepulchre it became incorruptible; because the body of our Lord did not remain long dead and buried, but rose again ||.

* Basnage, vol. i. p. 26. † Ib. vol. i. p. 423. ‡ Burnet on the Articles, p. 370. § Basnage. vol. iii. p. 687.

|| Larroche, p. 494.

The doctrine of transubstantiation was the cause of a great variety of new ceremonies and institutions in the church of Rome. Hence, among other things, those rich and splendid receptacles which were formed for the residence of God, under this new shape, and the lamps and other precious ornaments that were designed to beautify this habitation of the Deity; and hence the custom of carrying about this divine bread in solemn pomp, through the public streets, when it is to be administered to sick and dying persons, with many other ceremonies of the like nature. But what crowns the whole was the *festival of the holy sacrament*.

This was an institution of Urban IV. in 1264, on the pretended revelation of one Juliana, a woman of Liege, who said that it was shewed her from heaven, that this particular festival day of the holy eucharist, had always been in the councils of the sovereign Trinity; but that now the time of revealing it to men was come. In the decree of Urban it is said, "this festival day properly belongs to the sacrament, because there is no saint but what has his proper festival; that this is intended to confound the unbelief and extravagance of the heretics, and to repair all the faults that men might be guilty of in other masses *." This festival is attended with a procession in which the host is carried in great pomp and magnificence. No less a person than Thomas Aquinas composed the office for this great solemnity.

Notwithstanding all this pomp and splendor, which seldom fail to have charms for the bulk of mankind, this decree of Urban was not universally observed; and therefore it was confirmed by another bull of Clement V. But when the minds of men were a little enlightened after the reformation by Luther, this solemnity became the topic of much ridicule. On this account Catharine of Medicis wrote to the pope in 1561, as Thuanus informs us, to request the abolition of this festival, because it was the occasion of much scandal, and was not at all necessary. It may not be

* Larroche, p. 581.

amiss to give a more particular account of some of the other new superstitions mentioned above.

It was towards the end of the sixth century that the *elevation of the host* was first practised in the eastern church; but then it was intended to represent the elevation of Christ upon the cross, and was made immediately before the communion; and there is no mention of this ceremony in the western church before the eleventh century. But then it immediately followed the consecration, though no adoration is said to have been intended by this ceremony till the thirteenth century, when it was expressly appointed in the constitutions of Honorius III. and Gregory the IX. the latter of whom in 1227, ordered the ringing of a bell, to warn the people to fall down on their knees, and adore the consecrated host *. This, however, seems to have been done before by Guy Paré, the pope's legate in Germany; who, when he was at Cologne, in 1201, ordered, that when the host was elevated in the celebration of the mass, the people should prostrate themselves in the church at the sound of a bell †.

The ceremony of carrying the host in procession to communicate the sick, seems to have been first used in this country. For, at the end of the twelfth century, Hubert archbishop of Canterbury, and legate of pope Celestine, held a synod at York, in which, among other things, he commanded that when any sick persons were to receive the communion, the priest himself should carry the host, cloathed with his proper habits, and with lights borne before it, suitable to so great a sacrament ‡. We are also informed that, in the beginning of the thirteenth century, Odo, bishop of Paris, in one of his synods, made several constitutions relating to the sacrament; as about the manner of carrying it to the sick, of the adoration of the persons who should meet it, of keeping it in the best part of the altar, of locking it up safe, with several precautions in case it should happen that any part of the consecrated elements should fall to the ground, or any fly or spider should fall into the wine §.

* Lamoche, p. 102. † Histoire des Papes, vol. ii. p. 131.
‡ lb. p. 483. § Larroche, p. 484.

Considering how solemn a thing the business of *communicating* was made, in consequence of the doctrine of transubstantiation, we do not wonder that it was ordered by the council of Trent that, how contrite soever a sinner should feel himself, he should not approach the holy eucharist without having made his *sacramental confession*, nor at the solemnity which the receiving of the communion gave to an oath. This appeared, when pope Gregory VII. proposed to the emperor Henry, who was charged with many crimes, to exculpate himself, by taking one part of a consecrated host, while he himself should take the other. This proposal staggered the emperor so much, that he desired the affair to be referred to a general council *. But we are more surpris'd that, upon any occasion whatever, any person should be permitted to *eat* before he received the communion; and yet, application being made to the pope, on the part of the king of France, 1722, that he might take some nourishment before he received the communion, on the day of his consecration, as it was thought he would not be able to go through the fatigue of the ceremony without it, the request was granted. It must be presumed, however, that no other than the pope himself could have given so great a dispensation †.

It was owing to the great awfulness of the real masses, and the many ceremonies that were necessary to be observed in the celebration of them, that, for four or five hundred years, what are called *dry masses* (or the ceremony of the mass without the consecration of the elements) were much used in the church of Rome. They were more especially used by gentlemen who went a hunting early in the morning, or returned late, or when a new married couple wanted to receive benediction, &c. St. Louis often used this ceremony on board his vessel, and it served for a consolation to pilgrims, when they had no opportunity of having real masses in their return from the Holy Land. These dry masses were so common at one time, that there was a rubric in the Romish ritual prepared for them. But

* Fleury, A. D. 1077.

† Hist. des Papes, vol. v. p. 499.

the reformation opening mens eyes upon the subject, Eccius confessed that what had been practised so long, was, in truth, an impiety and blasphemy against God. The council of Trent did not however correct the abuse; but the bishops since that time have abolished it by degrees, and now it is only used on Good Fridays, and during storms at sea *.

We see the farther progress of superstition in the various methods that were devised in order to prevent the waste or abuse of the consecrated elements, which increased after the doctrine of transubstantiation. In the tenth century the priests began to put the bread into the mouths of the communicants, and in the eleventh they began in some churches, to use little hosts, like *wafers*, made round, white, and very thin; but this was not till after the condemnation of Berenger, and was disliked by many at that time; and the former custom of breaking the bread into little pieces, and also that of giving the bread steeped in the wine were still used in many places, till near the end of the twelfth century, after which the use of thin wafers became universal.

At length, in order to leave the least room for waste or abuse possible, the custom of communicating the laity with *bread only* was introduced; and the doctrine of transubstantiation made this practice much easier than it could otherwise have been. For it being now agreed that the consecrated bread was the *whole* body of Christ, it contained the blood of course; and consequently the wine, which was the blood only, became superfluous.

Thomas Aquinas defended the custom of communicating with the bread only, but he says that it was not observed in all churches; and the laity, in many places, in order to prevent the spilling of the wine, or as they called it, the blood of Christ (against which they were always most particularly cautioned) sucked it through quills or silver pipes, which were fastened to their chalices for that purpose. But at length, and especially from the custom of giving the bread steeped

* Balnage, vol. iii. p. 686.

in the wine, came by degrees, the custom of *communion in one kind only*, without any express authority for the purpose, in almost all the western churches, till it was established by the council of Constance, in 1415. But the custom of communicating in both kinds was still practised in several places, and the pope himself is said at one time to have administered the wine to the deacons and ministers of the altar, and to other persons of eminent piety, whom he thought worthy of so great a gift.

The council of Trent confirmed that of Constance, but left it to the pope to grant the use of the cup to those whom he should think proper. Accordingly Pius IV. granted the communion in both kinds to those who should demand it, provided they professed to believe as the church did in other respects *. The Bohemians also were allowed, with the pope's consent, to make use of the cup.

The high reverence for the eucharist, which was produced by the doctrine of transubstantiation, made a change in the posture of receiving it. For till the thirteenth century, all persons had communicated *standing*, but about that time the custom of receiving it *kneeling* came into use, and this is continued ever since in the church of Rome, and from that in the church of England. Frequent communion also was now no more to be expected, and indeed so early as the tenth century, Raterius bishop of Verona was obliged to order his priests to warn believers to come four times a year, to the communion †, and now the catholics are not required to communicate more than once a year, and this is generally at Easter.

There are various other superstitious practices respecting the eucharist in the church of Rome, the origin of which it is not easy to trace. There are six several sorts of *vestments* belonging to the officiating priest, and eight or nine to the bishop, and there is not one of them but has some mysterious signification, and a corresponding separate consecration; not to mention the different *colours* of them, and the different occa-

* Hist. des Papes, vol. iv. p. 679, † Larroche, p. 137.

sions on which they are used ; and they are all so necessary, that the smallest variation in the ritual, makes the masses be deemed imperfect.

As I observed before, that two masses must not be celebrated on the same altar in the course of one day, and even a priest cannot officiate at any altar, when a bishop has done it before him, they are now multiplied exceedingly. The masses also are reckoned defective, unless the altar be covered with three cloths, consecrated by the bishop, the last of which must be longer than the other ; and it must, after all, be covered with a *stuff* of some particular colour, according to the festival on which it is used. But the altar must be stripped of all its ornaments on Good Friday for reasons which may be seen in Basnage, vol. i. p. 48, together with many other superstitious observances relating to the eucharist, which I do not think it worth while to recite.

In the eleventh century there arose violent debates between the Greek and Latin churches on account of the former using *unleavened bread* in the celebration of the eucharist. Such, however, it is very evident, must have been the bread that our Saviour himself made use of in the institution, as there was no leaven to be had during the whole season of passover ; and at length the Latin church conformed to this custom.

Considering the many gross abuses which prevailed with respect to the Lord's supper after the time of Paschasius, it is no wonder that we meet with some persons who laid it aside altogether. This was the case with the *Paulicians* in the ninth century, who considered both baptism and the Lord's supper as something figurative and parabolical *. This was also the case with some persons in France, in the beginning of the eleventh century, and they were condemned at the synod, of Orleans, and again at Arras in 1025 †. Also in the twelfth century, one Tanchelin persuaded the people of Antwerp, and other persons in Flanders, that receiving the Lord's supper was not necessary to salvation. But indeed this he might do, without wish-

* Mosheim, vol. ii. 178.

† Fleury.

ing them to omit the celebration of it altogether.

As little can we wonder that unbelievers should take advantage of such a doctrine as this, to treat the christian religion with contempt, Averroes, the great free-thinker of his age, said that Judaism was the religion of children, and Mahometanism that of hogs; but he knew no sect so foolish and absurd as that of the christians, who adored what they eat *.

SECTION IV.

Of the Recovery of the genuine Christian Doctrine concerning the Lord's Supper.

As the corruption of this doctrine took place very early in the christian church, and proceeded farther than any other, so it was with great difficulty rectified; and indeed it is in general but very imperfectly done to this day, especially in the established reformed churches. The minds of the Reformers, in general, were impressed with an idea of something peculiarly mysterious and awful in the nature of the eucharist, as well as with a firm persuasion concerning the divinity of Christ.

Wickliffe was late in settling his notion about the Lord's supper; so that, in different parts of his writings, he contradicts himself on this subject †. John Hufs believed the doctrine of transubstantiation and the real presence; but in answer to a person who had said that a priest, after his consecration, was the *Father of God*, and the *creator of God's body*, he wrote a treatise to prove that Jesus Christ is the author of the transubstantiation, and the priest only the minister of it ‡.

It is remarkable, that with respect to most of the

* *Memoires pour la vie de Petrarch*, vol. iii. p. 760.

† *Gilpin's Life of him*, p. 65. ‡ *Lenfant's History of the Council of Constance*, vol. i. 432.

reformers from popery in the sixteenth century, the article of the eucharist was the last in which they gained any clear light, the doctrine of transubstantiation being that which they parted with with peculiar reluctance, and in all public disputations their popish adversaries had more advantage with respect to this than to any other subject. They advanced to the conferences with the utmost boldness when this was to be the subject of their disputation, having the prejudices of their audience, and in a great measure, those that were their adversaries too, on their side.

Though Luther rejected transubstantiation, he nevertheless retained the doctrine of the *real presence* of the body of Christ in the eucharist; believing that even the body of Christ might be omnipresent, as well as his divinity; and in the Lutheran *Form of concord*, which they made the terms of communion with them, this article was inserted. Luther, in his attempts to explain his doctrine on the subject of the eucharist (which to distinguish it from that of the papists, he called *consubstantiation*) said that as in a red hot iron, two distinct substances, the *iron* and the *fire* are united, so is the body of Christ joined with the bread in the eucharist*. Some Lutherans maintained, that all the properties of the divine nature were communicated to the human nature of Christ, and consequently its omnipresence, by the hypostatical union between them†. But these were more rigid than Luther himself, and it is supposed that being convinced by the reasons of Melancthon, he would have entertained the opinion of the other reformers on this subject, if death had not prevented him‡. Carolstadt, Luther's colleague, maintained that the bread and wine were no other than *signs* and *symbols*, designed to excite in the minds of christians the remembrance of the sufferings and death of Christ, and of the benefits which arise from them§.

It is remarkable that Zuinglius was much more rational than Luther on this subject. For he, like Carolstadt, considered the bread and wine as no more than signs and symbols of the body and blood of Christ,

* Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 331.

† Basnage, vol. iii. p. 331.

‡ Ib. vol. iv. p. 75.

§ Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 331.

and that we derive no benefit from the eucharist, except what arises from the recollection of the merits of Christ *. He would not even allow the ministers of the church the power of excluding flagitious members from church communion, but left all punishment to the civil magistrate †. Upon the whole, Zuinglius seems to have thought as rationally on the subject of the eucharist, as Socinus, who also considered it merely as a commemoration of the death of Christ.

Calvin was much less rational. For he supposed that a certain divine virtue or efficacy was communicated by Christ, together with the bread and wine ‡. And he not only excluded vicious persons from communion, but likewise procured their banishment from the city §.

We have a remarkable example of the confidence of the catholics on the subject of the eucharist in the famous conference of Poissy, in 1561, held in the presence of Charles IX. and Catharine of Medicis, in the court of France, between a number of popish and protestant divines, of whom the cardinal of Lorraine was the principal on the side of the catholics, and Beza on that of the protestants. The cardinal, in his speech on this subject, says, "We must always oppose these words of Christ, *This is my body*, to all argumentations, judgments, and speculations of the understanding. They will be fire and thunder to all consciences. Let us believe the Lord, and obey him in all things, and places; let us not contradict him, because what he tells us seems absurd, improper, and contrary to our senses and thought. Let his word overcome every thing, and be unto us, as it is, the most precious thing. This it becomes us to do every where, but especially in the holy mysteries. Let us not look only to the things we see, but let us observe his word, for his word is infallible, and cannot be false or deceive us. On the contrary, our senses are easily imposed upon, and deceive us often. Since then he has said, *this is my body*, let us not doubt of

* Mosheim, vol. iv. p. 76.

† Ib. p. 79.

‡ Ib. vol. iv. p. 115.

§ Ib. p. 115.

“ it, but believe, obey, and look upon him with the
“ eyes of our understanding, &c *.

On most other subjects the popish advocates rather declined the contest, but in this they thought they could triumph. This conference ended as all others in those days did, without giving any satisfaction to either party. The cardinal himself would have consented to an article on this subject sufficiently agreeable to the Lutheran doctrine, viz. That the *substance* of the body and blood of Christ is in the eucharist; but his brethren would not admit of it, thinking it captious and heretical †.

It is the doctrine both of the church of England, and of the establishment in Scotland, that some peculiar *divine virtue* is communicated with the eucharistical elements, when they are properly received, and therefore more preparation is enjoined for receiving this ordinance, than for attending public worship in general. In the twenty-fifth article of the church of England it is said, that “ sacraments ordained by Christ,
“ be not only badges or tokens of christian mens profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses,
“ and effectual signs of grace, and God’s good will
“ towards us, by the which he does work invisibly in us
“ and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and
“ confirm our faith in him.”

In the *Assembly’s catechism*, a sacrament is defined to be “ an holy ordinance, instituted by Christ;
“ wherein, by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of
“ the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.” The Lord’s supper in particular is said to be “ a sacrament, wherein, by giving
“ bread and wine, according to Christ’s appointment,
“ his death is shewed forth, and the worthy receivers
“ are not after a corporeal and carnal manner, but by
“ faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with
“ all its benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and
“ growth in grace.” Agreeably to these ideas, it is there said that, “ it is required of them who would

* Laval’s History of the Reformation in France, vol. i. p. 536.

† Ib. p. 583.

“worthily partake of the Lord's supper, that they
 “examine themselves, of their knowledge to discern
 “the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of
 “their repentance, love, and new obedience, lest, com-
 “ing unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to
 “themselves.”

This article of superstition has great hold on the minds of Dissenters in general, the Independants requiring before admission to communion, an account of what they call an *experience* in religion, or the evidence of a man's having had what they deem to be a miraculous *work of grace* upon his soul; so that they can have reason to think that he is one of the *elect*, and that he will not fall away. And on this account many Dissenters have *days of preparation* for receiving the Lord's supper, and they do not consider any person to be properly qualified to administer either this ordinance, or baptism, till he has been regularly ordained, though they have no objection to his preaching all his life, if he pleases, without that ceremony, or to attending upon his ministry in all other respects.

It can also be from nothing but the remains of superstition, that the number of communicants, even among the most liberal of the Dissenters, is very small, seldom exceeding one in ten of the congregation; and very few as yet bring their children to communion. On this subject Mr. Pierce wrote a very valuable tract, which has led many persons to think favourably of the practice, as the only effectual method of securing the attendance of christians in general, when they are grown up.

I would only advise the deferring of communion till the children be of a proper age to be brought to attend other parts of public worship, and till they can be made to join in the celebration with decency, so as to give no offence to others. This being a part of public worship, there cannot, I think, be any reason for making them communicate at an earlier age; and to make them do it at any period before it be properly an act of their own, will equally secure their attendance afterwards, which is the object to be aimed at. It is having had no particular fixed time for *beginning to*

communicate, that has been the reason of its being so generally neglected as it has been with us. I flatter myself, however, that in due time, we shall think rationally on this, as well as on other subjects relating to christianity, and that our practice will correspond with our sentiments.

THE
HISTORY
OF THE
Corruptions of Christianity.

PART VII.

The History of Opinions relating to BAPTISM.

THE INTRODUCTION.

THE rite of *baptism* was perhaps first practised by John, whose commission from God, was to *baptize unto repentance* all who should profess themselves to be his disciples. Our Saviour himself, was baptized, and probably all the apostles, who, by his directions, baptized others, even in his life time; and in his giving his commission to them, he commanded them to *baptize* as well as *disciple* all nations. Accordingly we find, in the book of Acts, that all who were converted to christianity, Jews as well as Gentiles, were received into the christian church by baptism; and at that time this rite appears to have been generally, though probably not always, performed by dipping the whole body in water.

As this rite is usually called the *baptism of repentance*, it was probably intended to represent the purity of heart and life which was required of all who professed themselves to be christians; and therefore a declaration of faith in Christ, and also of repentance, was always made by those who presented themselves to be baptized, at least if it was required of them. Nothing more, therefore, seems to have been meant by baptism originally, than a solemn declaration of a man's being a christian, and of his resolution to live as becomes one; and very far was it from being imagined, that there was any peculiar virtue in the rite itself. It was considered as laying a man under obligation to a virtuous and holy life, as the profession of christianity necessarily does, but not of itself making any person holy.

It is certain, that in very early times, there is no particular mention made of any person being baptized by *sprinkling* only, or a partial application of water to the body; but as on the other hand, the dipping of the whole body is not expressly prescribed, and the *moral emblem* is the same, viz. that of *cleanness* or *purity*, produced by the use of water, we seem to be at liberty to apply the water either to the whole body, or to a part of it, as circumstances shall make it convenient. The Greek word βαπτίζω certainly does not always imply a dipping of the whole body in water. For it is applied to that kind of washing which the Pharisees required before eating. See Luke xi. 38. Mark vii. 4. We read in the same evangelist of the baptism not only of cups, pots, and brazen vessels, but also of couches. Also, as in the Old Testament we often read of *sprinkling* with water, as Num. xix. 13. 18. Ezek. xxxvi. 25. and it is referred to in the New, Heb. ix. 19. where we read, *And Moses sprinkled both the book of the Law, and all the people*; I think it most probable, that when great numbers were baptized at the same time, the water was applied in this manner, the practice being sufficiently familiar to Jews.

In the three first centuries it was not uncommon to baptize persons at the hour of death, and in this case they certainly did not dip the whole body. Epipha-

nus speaks * of a Jewish patriarch being baptized by a christian, who was introduced in the disguise of a physician, on account of his being unwilling that his relations should know it; and the water was brought by a servant, as if it had been for some other purpose. Whether the story be true or false, it equally shews that the minds of christians in that age, were not shocked at the idea of baptizing in a manner which must have been nearly as it is now used, and that such was deemed a sufficient baptism. It is said, indeed, by some †, that the Eunomians made this change in the rite of baptism; thinking it indecent to plunge persons over-head in water, and especially naked; and that they therefore only uncovered them as far as the breast, and then poured the water upon their heads. But as the Eunomians were a branch of the Arians, it is not probable that the catholics, as they were called, would adopt the custom from them. Besides, if the practice of *immersion* had always been thought absolutely necessary to baptism, it is not probable that the christians of that age would have ever departed from it. As superstition increased, we shall have evidence enough, that they were more ready to *add* than to *diminish*, with respect to every thing that was of a ceremonial nature.

It has been much debated whether *infants* were considered as proper subjects for baptism in the primitive church. Now, besides, that we are not able to trace the origin of infant baptism, and therefore are necessarily carried back into the age of the apostles for it, a controversy arose pretty early in the christian church, which would naturally have led some persons to deny the antiquity of the practice, if they could; and considering the state of opinions and practices with respect to things of a similar nature, it is natural to suppose that the primitive christians would baptize infants as well as adult persons.

With respect to this subject, I cannot think that writers have attended so much as they ought to have done to the power of a master of a family (the *patria potestas*) in

* Hær. xxx. Opera, vol. i. p. 128.

† See Jortin's Remarks, vol. ii. p. 282.

the East, and particularly have not considered how far his own character and profession usually affected his wife, his children, and his servants, and indeed every thing that belonged to him. When the Ninevites repented, they made even their cattle to fast, and wear sackcloth, as well as themselves; not that they could consider their cattle as having any occasion to repent, but they did it in order to express, in a stronger manner, their own humiliation and contrition*.

Agreeably to these prevailing ideas, though circumcision was a religious rite, instituted as a symbol of the covenant between God and the descendants of Abraham by Isaac and Jacob, yet not only was Ishmael circumcised, but also all the slaves of Abraham, who had no interest whatever in the promises made to him. The application of this rite, therefore, to Ishmael, and to the slaves of Abraham, was no more than a necessary appendage to the circumcision of Abraham himself, as master of a family. It was *his own act* only, and therefore the consent of Ishmael or of the slaves cannot be supposed to have been in the least degree necessary. From the same fact we must also conclude that circumcision, as such, could not express any interest that the subjects of it had in the things signified by it; for then Ishmael and the slaves of Abraham would have had an equal interest in them.

There can be no doubt but that when the Jews in future ages made converts to their religion, they obliged every master of a family both to submit to this rite himself, and likewise to see that all his household, or all that depended upon him, did the same. For the same reason, whatever other rite had been enjoined them, and whatever it had expressed, the same people would, no doubt, have applied it in the same indiscriminate manner to the master of the family, and to all his household. It was natural therefore, for the apostles, and other Jews, on the institution of baptism, to apply it to infants, as well as to adults, as a token of the profession of christianity by the master of the family only; and this they would do without considering it as a

* See Jonah iii. 7. 8.

substitute for circumcision, and succeeding in the place of it, which it is never said to do in the scriptures, though some have been led by some circumstances of resemblance in the two rites to imagine that this was the case. According to the general ideas, and the established custom of the Jews and other Asiatics, in similar cases, they would not have thought of adopting any other practice than that of infant baptism, without particular directions.

Accordingly, we find in the scriptures, that the jailor, on professing his faith in Christ, was baptized, *he and all his*, Acts xvi. 33. and that Lydia was baptized, and *all her household*, Ver. 15. Now it is certain that to a Jew these phrases would convey the idea of the children, at least, if not of the domestic slaves, having been baptized, as well as the head of the family. A Roman also could not have understood them to imply less than all who were subject to what was called the *patria potestas*.

It also appears to me to be very evident from ecclesiastical history, and the writings of the christian Fathers, that infant baptism was the uniform practice of the primitive christians, and continued to be so till along with other superstitious notions, they got the idea of the efficacy of baptism *as such* to wash away sins, and consequently of the peculiar safety of dying presently after they were baptized, before any fresh guilt could be contracted. Now an argument derived from the uniform practice of the primitive christians, cannot but be allowed to have considerable weight, as an evidence of its having been a practice of the apostolical times, and having the sanction of apostolical authority. It is from the evidence of tradition only, deduced from the uninterrupted practice of the christian churches, that we now set apart not the seventh but the first day of the week, for the purpose of public worship. There is no express authority for this in the New Testament.

Tertullian indeed advises to defer baptism till persons be of age to be christians, lest it should bring their sponsors into danger; alleging also *, that their

* De Baptismo, sect. 18. Opera, p. 231.

innocent age had no need to hasten to the remission of sins. But he no where insinuates that infant baptism was not even the universal custom of his time, or that it had been an *innovation*; which, in pleading against it, he might naturally have been expected to insist upon. He was only offended at the too great readiness with which all persons were admitted to baptism, when some of them were afterwards a disgrace to their profession. He therefore advises to defer it *in all cases*, and in that of infants also.

If we trace the progress of this affair, a little farther, we shall find that when, by the prevalence of the liberal sentiments of christianity, more account was made of *slaves*, as being of the same species with their masters, and equally interested with them in the privileges and promises of the gospel, and especially when, in consequence of this, they acquired more civil rights, and were allowed to act for themselves more than they had done, they were considered as having religious interests of their own. Indeed, in the time of the Romans, slaves, being of different nations, were allowed (agreeably to the genius of the pagan system) to practise some of their peculiar religious rites; and a great many of the first christian converts were slaves; their masters, at that time, not finding themselves or their interest affected by it, and therefore not taking any umbrage at it.

It happened, also, that the power of a father over his children was much less in these northern nations of Europe, than it was in the East, or among the Romans, with whom, likewise, it sensibly declined. On this account, and also because, from the very first promulgation of christianity it could not but be manifest, that persons were interested in it, as *individuals*, and not as members of families, or societies, I make no doubt, but that in general, if there were adult children or slaves in a family, at the time that the master professed himself a christian, they were not baptized without their own consent; but no consideration, that can be supposed to have occurred either to the Jews or Romans, could have led them to make the same exception in favour of infants.

Considering how very different are the ideas and customs of these times, and these parts of the world, from those which prevailed among the Jews, when baptism was instituted, the peculiar reasons for applying it to infants have, in a great measure, ceased. But still, as the practice is of apostolical authority, it appears to me, that no innovation ought to be made in it by any power whatever; but that we ought rather to preserve those ideas which originally gave a propriety to it, especially when there is nothing unnatural in them. For my own part, I endeavour to adhere to the primitive ideas above-mentioned, and therefore I consider the baptizing of my children, not as directly implying that they have any interest in it, or in the things signified by it, but as a part of my own profession of christianity, and consequently as an obligation, which, as such, I am under, to educate my children and also to instruct my servants, in the principles of the christian religion. In this view of the ordinance of baptism, infants are indirectly interested in it, whether they adhere to the profession of christianity, and thereby secure the blessings of it when they become adults, so as to think and act for themselves, or not.

It is possible, that, at this time, and in these parts of the world, we may not see so much reason for any *positive institutions*; but with the Jews, and indeed throughout all the East, nothing is more common than to express sentiments and purposes by appropriated actions. Now washing with water so naturally expresses purity of heart, and is a thing so agreeable in itself, especially in hot countries, that we cannot wonder it should be made choice of to denote the profession of a religion which brings men under the strictest obligations to repent and reform their lives; and particularly that John the Baptist, whose immediate business it was to preach repentance, should be directed to enjoin it.

Whether baptism be of earlier antiquity than John the Baptist, I have not been able to satisfy myself. Maimonides, and the earliest Jewish writers, speak of solemn baptism as a necessary attendant on circumcision, whenever any new converts were made to their religion, and also as a practice that was immemorial among them. But whether it was tacitly implied in the origi-

mal institution of circumcision, or whether it had been adopted afterwards, as naturally expressive of the new converts cleansing themselves from the impurities of their former state of heathenism, it was probably the custom of the Jews in the time of our Saviour.

If this was the case, and the Jews did both circumcise and baptize all that were capable of it, when families were converted to their religion, there was both the less reason for explaining the nature and the use of the rite on the first mention of it, or for describing more particularly than has been done, who were the proper subjects of baptism. And we may rather suppose that our Lord would have expressly restricted the application of it to adult persons, if he had intended that the prevailing custom should be altered. Consequently, when a master of a family was converted to christianity, he would, of course, be required to baptize all his household, and consider himself as bound to instruct them in the principles of the religion that he professed.

If any controversy was ever calculated to bring a fact of this nature to light, it was that of Pelagius and Austin about original sin, in which the latter maintained that baptism was necessary to wash it away; the second spiritual birth counteracting the effects of the first carnal birth. Now the utmost that Pelagius appears to have replied on this subject was, that infant baptism was not necessary. But he did not pretend to say that the practice was not then universal, or that it had not always been so. Nay Austin says*, that it was agreed between him and his opponent, that infants ought to be baptized, and that they differed only about the reason why they were to be baptized.

We also find no trace of its being thought that the baptism of either the master of a family, or of his household, on their first profession of christianity, might suffice for their descendants; and though the Jews did not repeat that baptism which accompanied circumcision, yet the circumcision itself was repeated on every male, so that if the christians in the primitive times

* *De Verbis Apostoli Sermo*, xiii. *Opera*, vol. x. p. 318.

had been influenced by any *analogies* between the Jewish religion and their own, they would rather have been led to repeat the rite of baptism with respect to their children, than to discontinue it.

Lastly, I am not able to interpret 1 Cor. vii. 14, *The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, or else were the children unclean, but now they are holy*, more naturally than by supposing, that as by *holy*, the Jews meant *devoted to God*, so by *a child being holy*, they meant that it had a right to the ceremonies of their holy religion. As therefore a child born of one Jewish parent had a right to circumcision, so a child born of one christian parent had a right to baptism. Indeed, I do not see what other rational meaning can be assigned to the *holiness of a child*.

It is remarkable that the christians in Abyssinia repeat their baptism annually, on the festival of Epiphany*.

SECTION I.

Of the Opinions and Practices of the Christians relating to Baptism till the Reformation.

THERE is this difference with respect to the corruptions of the rite of baptism, and those of the Lord's supper, that though they both began about the same time, and those relating to baptism were perhaps the earlier of the two, and the progress of superstition in consequence of this corruption, was rather more rapid in the first century of christianity, it was by no means so afterwards. For after the time of those who are more properly called *Fathers*, we find no material alteration in the rite of baptism itself (though the business of *confirmation* grew out of it) whereas we have seen the most material additions were made to the doctrine of the eucharist so late as the ninth century.

* Geddes's Church History of Ethiopia, p. 33.

In the age immediately following that of the apostles, we find that *baptism* and *regeneration* were used as synonymous terms; and whereas, originally, the pardon of sin was supposed to be the consequence of that reformation of life which was only *promised* at baptism, it was now imagined that there was something in the *rite itself*, to which that grace was annexed; and in general it seems to have been imagined that this *sanctifying virtue* was in the *water*, and in no other part of the ordinance as administered by the priest.

Tertullian says, that the holy spirit was always given in baptism; and yet he expressly denied that it was bestowed by the laying on of hands. This writer says farther, that the spirit of God descends upon the water of baptism, like a dove. Cyprian adds that the adorable Trinity is ineffably in baptism. Paulinus says, that the water conceives and contains God; Chrysostom, that the water ceases to be what it was before, and is not fit for drinking, but is proper for sanctifying. He says*, that the christian baptism is superior to that of John, in that his was the *baptism of repentance*, but had not the power of *forgiving sin*. And Austin adds, that it touches the body and purifies the heart †.

Christians having now got the idea that baptism washed away sin, a field was opened for much seducing eloquence on the subject, which could not fail to confirm and increase the prevailing superstition. Chrysostom, speaking of baptism, says, “When you are come to the bed of the holy spirit, to the portico of grace, to the dreadful and desirable bath, throw yourselves upon the ground, as prisoners before a king ‡.”

Superstitious practices, similar to those which followed the corruption of the doctrine of the eucharist, did not fail to accompany this undue reverence for the water of baptism. We find that in the third century the noviciates returned from baptism adorned with crowns, and cloathed with white garments in

* Hom. xxiv. Opera, vol. i. p. 312. † Basnage Histoire des Eglises Reformées, vol. i. p. 138. ‡ Basnage, vol. i. p. 139.

token of their victory over sin and the world. If they scrupled eating before they received the eucharist, they made a greater scruple of washing after baptism. They would not do it till the end of the week; and immediately after baptism they wiped the bodies of the catechumens lest a drop of the sacramental water should fall to the ground. They went to church on the Sunday to put off their white garments, and to receive what was called the *ablution*.

It was even believed that a miracle was wrought on the water that was drawn on the day of Epiphany, because Jesus Christ had been baptized at that time. They carried it with respect to their houses after it had been consecrated; it was kept with care, and Chrysostom said that it would keep sweet many years*. This water was even given instead of the eucharist to penitents who were not entirely reconciled to the church; and Austin says the catechumens among other means are sanctified by it. "The water," he says, "is holy, though it be not the body of Christ. It is more holy than the other aliments, because it is a sacrament." He says, at the same time, that the catechumens are sanctified by the sign of the cross, and by the imposition of hands, which had also been made appendages of baptism at that time†. It appears by a passage in Austin, that the African christians usually called baptism *salvation*, and the eucharist *life*, preferring the former to the latter.

When once it was imagined that a person newly baptized was cleansed from all sin, it is no wonder that many persons deferred this sanctifying rite as long as possible, even till they apprehended that they were at the point of death. We find cases of this kind at the beginning of the third century. Constantine the Great, was not baptized till he was at the last gasp, and in this he was followed by his son Constantius; and two of his other sons Constantine and Constans, were killed before they were baptized.

When baptism was administered to persons near the

* Hom, xxiv. Op. vol. i. p. 311.

† De Peccatorum Meritis, lib. iv. cap. xxvi. Opera, vol. vii. p. 711.

point of death, the patient must generally have been in bed, and consequently the ceremony could not have been performed by *immersion*; and it appears in the history of Novatian that this was actually the case. On these occasions, the *unction*, and other ceremonies which had been added to the simple rite of baptism, were omitted; but they were performed afterwards, if the sick person recovered. We even find that, rather than omit baptism entirely, it was usual to baptize persons who were actually dead. Epiphanius, Chrysostom, and Theodorit, observe that this custom prevailed in some places in their time*.

After the age of Justin Martyr we find many additions made to the rite of baptism. It was then the custom to give the person baptized milk and honey, and to abstain from washing all the remainder of the day, for which Tertullian says they had no authority from the scripture, but only from tradition. They also added *unction* and the *imposition of hands*; the unction probably, referring, in a symbolical manner, to their preparation for a spiritual combat; and in applying the oil the priest touched the hand or the forehead in the form of a cross. Tertullian is the first who mentions the *signing with the sign of the cross*, but only as used in private, and not in public worship; and he particularly describes the custom of baptizing without mentioning it. Indeed, it does not appear to have been used in baptism till the latter end of the fourth or fifth century; but then we find great virtue ascribed to it. Lactantius, who lived in the beginning of the fourth century, says the devil cannot approach those who have the heavenly mark of the cross upon them, as an impregnable fortress to defend them†; but he does not say it was used in baptism.

After the council of Nice christians added to baptism the ceremonies of *exorcism*, and adjurations, to make evil spirits depart from the persons to be baptized. They made several signings with the cross, they used to light candles, they gave salt to the baptized persons to taste, and the priest touched his mouth and ears with

* Basnage, vol. i. p. 137. † Inst. lib. iv. cap. xxvii. p. 439

spittle, and also blew and spit upon his face. At that time also baptized persons were made to wear white garments till the Sunday following, as was mentioned above. They had also various other ceremonies, some of which are now abolished, though others of them remain in the church of Rome to this day. Blowing in the face, putting salt in the mouth, giving milk and honey, and also kissing the baptized persons, and making them abstain for some time from wine, are now no longer in use. The reason of these ceremonies may be pretty easily conceived. I shall, therefore only observe, that the *salt* was used as a symbol of purity and wisdom; and that exorcism took its rise from the Platonic notion that evil dæmons hovered over human souls, seducing them to sin.

In a decree of the council of Laodicea, held in the year 364, mention is made of *two anointings*, one with simple oil before baptism, and the other with ointment (*μύρον*) after baptism; and it is there expressed, that the first unction was for the participation of the holy spirit, that the water was a symbol of death, and that the ointment, which was applied with the sign of the cross, was for the seal of the covenant*. This latter unction we shall find was afterwards reserved for the bishops, and became the subject of a distinct sacrament in the church of Rome, called *Confirmation*.

Originally the bishop only, or the priests by his permission, administered baptism; as, with his leave, they also performed any other of his functions; but it appears from Tertullian that, in his time, laymen had, in some cases, the power of baptizing. This baptism, however, we may be assured, required the confirmation of the bishop, and would not be allowed but in cases of necessity, as at the seeming approach of death, &c. At the synod at Elvira, in 306, it was allowed that a layman, provided he had not been married a second time, might baptize catechumens in case of necessity; but it was ordered that, if they survived, they should be brought to the bishop for the imposition of hands. Afterwards, when the bounds of the

* Sueur, A. D. 364.

church were much enlarged, the business of baptizing was left also entirely to the priests, or the country bishops, and the bishops of great sees only *confirmed* afterwards.

Great doubts were raised in early times about the validity of baptism as administered by heretics. Tertullian, before he became a Montanist, wrote a treatise to prove that heretics, not having the same God, or the same Christ, with the orthodox, their baptism was not valid. Cyprian called a synod at Carthage, in which it was determined, that no baptism was valid out of the catholic church, and therefore, that those who had been heretics should be re-baptized. But Stephen, the bishop of Rome, did not approve of this decision, and by degrees his opinion, which continued to be that of the church of Rome, became every where prevalent. Indeed when so much stress was laid upon baptism itself, it would have introduced endless anxiety if much doubt had remained about the power of administering it.

Having given this account of the corruption of the doctrine of baptism, and the principal abuses and superstitions with respect to the practice of it, I shall go over what farther relates to the subject according to the order of administration.

When christians from a fondness for the rites and ceremonies of paganism, and a desire to engage the respect of their heathen acquaintance for the religion which they had embraced, began to adopt some of the maxims and rites of their old religion, they seem to have been more particularly struck with what related to the *mysteries*, or the more sacred rites of the pagan religion, to which only few persons were admitted, and those under a solemn oath of secrecy. In consequence of this disposition, both the positive institutions of christianity, *Baptism* and the *Lord's supper*, were converted into mysteries, christians affecting great secrecy with respect to the mode of administering them, and no person could then be admitted to attend the whole of the public worship before he was baptized; but all who were classed with the *Catechumens* were dismissed before the celebration of the eucharist, which closed the service.

Farther, those who were admitted to the heathen mysteries had certain *signs* or *symbols*, delivered to them by which they might know each other, so that by declaring them they might be admitted into any temple and to the secret worship and rites of that God whose symbols they had received. In imitation of this, it occurred to the christians to make a similar use of the *Apostles creed*, or that short declaration of faith which it had been usual to require of persons before they were baptized. This creed, therefore, (which does not appear to have been published, and indeed was altered from time to time, as particular heresies arose in the church) they now began to call a *symbol*, affecting to conceal it from the pagans, and not revealing it even to the catechumens themselves, except just before they were baptized; and then it was delivered to them as a symbol by which they were to know one another.

Cyprian says, that *the sacrament of faith*, that is *the creed*, was not to be prophaned or divulged, for which he cites two texts, the one Proverbs xxiii. 9, *Speak not in the ears of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of thy word*; and the other Matthew vii. 6, *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, &c.* Ambrose most pathetically exhorts to the utmost vigilance, to conceal the christian mysteries, and in particular to be very careful not by incautiousness to reveal the secrets of the *creed* or the *Lord's prayer*. This last appears very extraordinary, as the Lord's prayer is contained in the gospels, where it might be seen by any person*.

In the second century baptism was performed publicly only twice in the year, viz. on Easter and Whitsunday. In the same age *sponsors* or *Godfathers*, were introduced to answer for adult persons, though they were afterwards admitted in the baptism of infants†. This, Mr. Daille says, was not done till the fourth century.

It should seem from the Acts of the apostles, that it was sufficient to the ceremony of baptism, to say *I baptize thee in the name of Jesus Christ*. But we soon find

* Hist. of the Apostles Creed, p. 20. † Mosheim, vol. i. p. 172.

that the form of words used, Matthew xxviii. 19. was strictly adhered to, at least in the third century, viz. *I baptize thee in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*. It appears, however, that at the time of Justin Martyr, they did not always confine themselves to these particular words, but sometimes added others by way of explanation. For though these precise words occur in one account of baptism by this writer *; in another he speaks of baptism, “Into the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified by Pontius Pilate, and into the name of the holy Spirit, who foretold by the holy prophets every thing relating to Christ†:” But perhaps this explanation might be only intended for the use of his readers, and not given by him, as a form of words that was used in the administration of baptism itself.

We find very little mention made of baptism, from the time of those who were generally called *Fathers*, that is from the age of Austin, to the reformation. Indeed I have hardly met with any thing on the subject worth reciting.

It soon became a maxim, that as baptism was a sacrament that was to be used only *once*, it was exceedingly wrong to *re-baptize* any person; and it is pleasant to observe the precaution that pope Boniface hit upon to prevent this in dubious cases. In his statutes or instructions he says, “They whose baptism is dubious, ought without scruple to be baptized, with this protestation, *I do not rebaptize thee, but if thou art not baptized, I baptize thee, &c.*” This is the first example that I have found of *conditional baptism* ‡.

From the earliest account of the ordinance, we find that children received the Lord’s supper, and that baptism always preceded communion. In a book of divine offices, written as some think in the eleventh century, it is ordained that care be taken that young children receive no food after baptism, and that they do not even give them suck without necessity, till after they have participated of the body of Christ §.

* Edit. Thirlby, p. 89. † Ib. p. 91. ‡ Jortin’s Remarks, vol. iv. p. 462. § Larroche, p. 129.

SECTION II.

The State of Opinions concerning Baptism, since the Reformation.

IT is remarkable that though the Waldenses always practised infant baptism*, many of the Albigenes, if not all of them, held that baptism ought to be confined to adults. This was the opinion of the Petrobrussians†, and also of Berenger‡.

Wickliffe thought baptism to be necessary to salvation. "The priest," he says, "in baptism administers only the token or sign, but God, who is the priest and bishop of our souls, administers the spiritual grace§." And Luther not only retained the rite of baptism, but even the ceremony of *exorcism*. At least, this was retained in the greatest part of the Lutheran churches||.

It appeared, however, presently after the reformation by Luther, that great numbers had been well prepared to follow him, and even to go farther than he did. Very many had been so much scandalized with the abuses of baptism, and the Lord's supper; especially, as to reject them, either in the whole, or in part. The baptism of infants was very generally thought to be irrational, and therefore it was administered only to adults. Most of those who rejected the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, were of this persuasion, as was Socinus himself. Indeed, he and some others, thought that the rite of baptism was only to be used when persons were converted to christianity from some other religion, and was not to be applied to any who were born of christian parents, it does not appear, however, that those who held this opinion ever formed a separate sect, or that their numbers were considerable; but those who rejected infant baptism were then, and still are, very numerous.

* Leger's Histoire, p. 65.

† Fleury, A. D. 1050.

‡ Mosheim, vol. iv. 58.

† Basnage, vol. ii. p. 140.

§ Gilpin's Life of him, p. 6.

It happened that many of those who held this opinion entertained some very wild notions, especially that of the reign of Christ, or of the saints, upon earth, independent of any secular power ; and they made an attempt to set up a monarchy of this kind at Munster in Westphalia, which they seized upon for that purpose in the 1534. But an end was soon put to this delusion, and an odium very unjustly remained upon all those who retained nothing but their doctrine concerning baptism. At present those who are called *Baptists*, are as peaceable as any other christians. In Holland they are called *Mennonites*, from Menno, a very considerable person among them ; and these have adopted the pacific doctrines of the Quakers in England. In this country the Baptists are very numerous. The greatest part of them are called *particular Baptists*, from their holding the doctrine of particular election ; but there are a few societies of them who are called *general Baptists*, from their holding the doctrine of general redemption.

The church of England retains the baptism of infants, and also the use of the sign of the cross, and of godfathers. It also admits of baptism by women, a custom derived from the opinion of the indispensable necessity of baptism to salvation. “ We do not,” says bishop Burnet, “ annul this custom, though we condemn it.” And indeed it is the language of the public forms of the church of England, that baptism is necessary to salvation. In the thirty-nine articles we find the doctrine of an invisible work of God accompanying baptism, as well as the Lord’s supper ; and in the church catechism it is said that by baptism a person becomes *a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.*

The doctrine of the church of Scotland is of a piece with this. For baptism is said, in their confession of faith, to be “ a sign or seal of the covenant of grace, “ of persons ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, “ of remission of sins, &c. But the efficacy of baptism is there said not to be “ tied to that moment of time “ wherein it is administered ; yet notwithstanding by “ the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised

“ is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such, whether of age or infants, as that grace belongs to, according to the council of God’s own will, in his appointed time.”

The Dissenters of the Calvinistic persuasion in England, may possibly retain the opinion of some spiritual grace accompanying baptism, though I rather think it is not at present held by them. Nothing, however, of it is retained by those who are called *rational Dissenters*. They consider the baptism of adult persons as the mode of taking upon them the christian profession ; and that when it is applied to infants, an obligation is acknowledged by the parents to educate their children in the principles of the christian religion. Many of them lay so little stress upon it, that I imagine they would make no great difficulty of deferring it to adult age, or indeed of omitting it intirely in christian families ; but they do not think it of importance enough to make any new sect in the christian church on account of it, or to act otherwise than their ancestors have done before them, in a matter of so great indifference. The Quakers make no use either of this rite, or of the Lord’s supper.

A N
APPENDIX
T O
PARTS VI. AND VII.

CONTAINING

*The History of the other Sacraments besides Baptism and
the Lord's Supper.*

AFTER it was imagined that there was some *divine* virtue accompanying the administration of baptism and the Lord's supper, and these two rites had obtained the name of *sacraments*, which only priests regularly ordained had the power of administering with effect; other things, by degrees, obtained the same name; some spiritual grace being supposed to accompany them, and this contributed to extend the power and enlarge the province of the priesthood. At length *five* other ceremonies, besides baptism and the Lord's supper came to be ranked in the same class with them.

Peter Lombard, in the twelfth century, is the first who mentions *seven sacraments*. It is supposed that from the expression of the *seven spirits of God*, in the book of the Revelations, there came to be a notion of the seven-fold operation of the spirit. But whether this was the true origin of *seven* sacraments, in preference to any other number, or whether it was used as an argument in support of an opinion already formed, I have not found; nor indeed is the matter of importance enough to make much enquiry about it. Eugenius is the first pope who mentions these seven sacraments, in his *instructions to the Armenians*, which is published along with the decrees of the council of Florence; and the whole doctrine concerning them was finally settled by the council of Trent*.

* Burnet on the Articles, p. 335.

The five additional sacraments are, *confirmation*, *penance*, *holy orders*, *matrimony*, and *extreme unction*. It is, however, with great difficulty that the papists bring all these things within the description of a *sacrament*; as they say that in order to constitute one, there must be some *matter*, corresponding to water in baptism, and bread and wine in the Lord's supper (which were a pattern for the rest) and also a *set form of words*, corresponding to *I baptise thee in the name of the Father*, &c. for baptism, and to the words, *This is my body*, for the Lord's supper. The *inward and spiritual grace* was some divine influence which they supposed to follow the due application of this matter of sacraments, and the proper words accompanying the administration of them.

I shall give a general account of all these different sacraments, though the subjects of some of them will be treated more fully in other places of this work.

From the *second unction*, which was originally an appendage to the rite of baptism, another distinct sacrament was made, and called *confirmation*.

The church of Rome, in the time of a pope Sylvester, had two unctions of *chrism* (a composition of olive oil, and balm, *opobalsamum*) one on the breast, by the priest, and the other on the forehead by the bishop. But, from the time of Gregory III. the priests had been allowed to anoint on the forehead, and Honoré of Autun, a writer of the twelfth century, informs us that after the priest had anointed the head, it was covered with a mitre, which was worn eight days, at the end of which it was taken off, and then the bishop anointed the forehead with the chrism. From this time the church of Rome, seeing that the unction of the bishop was different from that of the priest, and performed at a different time, made of it a sacrament distinct from baptism, and called it *confirmation*, which can only be administered by the bishop. The first express institution of this sacrament is in the decree of pope Eugenius, in 1439, in which he says "the second sacrament is confirmation, the matter of which is chrism blessed by the bishop, and

“ though the priest may give the other unction, the
“ bishop only can confer this *.”

In administering confirmation in the church of Rome, the bishop applies the chrism to the forehead, pronouncing these words, “ I sign thee with the sign of
“ the cross, and confirm thee with the anointing of sal-
“ vation in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and
“ of the Holy Ghost †.”

In the church of England the rite of confirmation is preserved, though it is not held to be a sacrament. Also the use of chrism is omitted, but the ceremony can only be performed by the bishop, who puts his hand upon the head of the persons to be confirmed, and prays for the influence of the Holy Spirit upon them, saying, “ We have now laid on our hands to certify
“ them by this sign, of thy favour, and gracious good-
“ nefs.”

This is evidently a remainder of the popish sacrament of confirmation. But there is no more authority for this remainder, than for any thing that is omitted in the ceremony. Bishop Burnet, and other advocates for the doctrine and discipline of the church of England, allege in favour of it the conduct of the apostles, who put their hands upon the heads of those who had been converted and baptized, and thereby imparted to them the gift of the Holy Spirit, or a power of working miracles. But, besides that no such power is now pretended to be conferred, this imposition of hands was the province of the apostles only, and not that of a bishop. This custom of reserving the imposition of hands after baptism, to be performed by the bishop alone, seems to have been begun in the time of Jerom, but he himself did not think that the Holy Spirit was given by the imposition of the hands of the bishop only; and he says, they are not to be lamented, who, being baptized by presbyters or deacons, in little villages, and castles, have died before they were visited by bishops. Hilary says that presbyters confirmed in

* Sueur, A. D. 416. † Burnet on the Articles, p. 336.

Egypt, if the bishop was not present. The same also was determined by the council of Orange.*

The origin of *penance*, which is a second additional sacrament now enjoined by the church of Rome, will be examined in its proper place. It is now considered as a sacrament, in consequence of the *confession* and the *penance* that is enjoined, being together the *matter* of the sacrament; and the words of the priest *I absolve thee from thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, is the *form* of it. After this, the *spiritual grace*, or the remission of sins, is held to be conferred. The mention of these things at this day, is a sufficient exposing of them.

The church of England retains something of this sacrament also, though without the name of one. For, in the rules of confessing the sick, the priest is directed in certain cases to pronounce an *absolution*; and in the daily prayers of the church, after the confession which begins the service, something like absolution is pronounced. In this the compilers of the English liturgy followed the method of the popish service; and at the time of the reformation it might serve to make the more ignorant of the people believe that, notwithstanding a change in other respects, the same things *in substance* were to be had in both the communions.

The next sacrament is *holy orders*, the matter of which is the *delivery of the vessels*, used in the celebration of the eucharist, from the bishop to the priest, giving him a power “to offer sacrifices to God, and to “celebrate masses for the living and the dead,” adding, as in all the other sacraments *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. This ceremony was not used till after the twelfth century, but then this sacrament of *Orders* was held to be a thing distinct from the office of *Priesthood* in general, which is said to be conferred by the bishop, pronouncing these words, *Receive the Holy Ghost. Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted, and whose sins ye retain, they are retained*. The imposition of hands by the bishops and presbyters is also kept up among the catholics; but it

* Pierce's Vindication, p. 474.

is not performed, as formerly, during the pronouncing of any prayer, so that it is become a mere dumb shew. The prayer which accompanied the ceremony of imposition of hands, is indeed still used, but not during the imposition.

In consequence of this new sacrament, the catholics now say, that their priests have two kinds of power, viz. that of *consecrating*, and that of *absolving*; that they are ordained to the one by the laying on of the hands of the bishop, when he says, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*, and to the other by the delivery of the vessels; and they make the bishop and the priest laying on their hands jointly, to be only their declaring by way of suffrage, that such a person ought to be ordained *.

The third sacrament peculiar to the church of Rome, is *matrimony*, the *inward consent of the parties* being supposed to be the *matter* of it, and the *form* is, the priest solemnly declaring them to be man and wife, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But if the inward consent of the parties be necessary to marriage, as a sacrament, there must be a great uncertainty in it. One considerable inconvenience that resulted from making marriage a sacrament was, that the bond was held to be indissoluble. In consequence of this, a sentence of divorce in the ecclesiastical court, is only what is called with us, *a divorce a mensa et thoro*, but does not empower the parties to marry again, which is a kind of divorce unknown in any age or country before. The innocent person, however, was allowed to marry again by the popes Gregory and Zachary, and even in a synod held at Rome in the tenth century. The doctrine of the absolute indissolubility of marriage, even for adultery, was not finally settled till the council of Trent †.

The last additional sacrament of the church of Rome, is *extreme unction*, so called from its being used only on the near approach of death. The form of this sacrament, they say, is the application of olive oil, bless-

* Burnet on the Articles, p. 354, &c. † Ib. 360.

ed by the bishop, to all the five senses, using these words, "By this sacred unction may God grant thee his mercy in whatsoever thou hast offended, by sight, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching;" the priest applying the oil to each of the senses, as he pronounces the name of it.

The first mention that is made of this ceremony is by pope Innocent. Sacred oil, indeed, was held in great veneration so early as the fourth century, and esteemed as an universal remedy, for which purpose it was either prepared and dispensed by priests and monks, or was taken from the lamps which were kept burning before the relics of the martyrs. But in none of the lives of the saints before the ninth century, is there any mention made of their receiving extreme unction, though their deaths are sometimes particularly related, and their receiving the eucharist is often mentioned. But from the seventh century to the twelfth, they began to use this anointing of the sick, and a peculiar office was made for it; but the prayer that was used in it plainly shews that it was with a view to their recovery, for which purpose it is still used in the Greek church; and no doubt they support the credit of it with many reports, of which some may be true, of persons who had recovered upon using it.

But because it failed so often, that the credit of this rite was in danger of suffering much in the esteem of the world, they began in the tenth century, to say that it did good to the *soul*, even when the body was not the better for it, and then they applied it to the several parts of the body, after having originally applied it to the diseased parts only. In this manner was the rite performed in the eleventh century. In the twelfth the prayers that had been made before for the soul of the sick person, though only a part of the office (the pardon of sin being supposed to be preparatory to their recovery) came to be considered as the most essential part of it. After this, the schoolmen brought it into shape, and then it was decreed to be a sacrament by pope Eugenius; and it was finally established at the council of Trent *

* Burnet on the Articles, p. 365.

Notwithstanding the novelty, and apparent absurdity of these five additional sacraments, Wickliffe acknowledged all the seven ; defining a sacrament to be a *visible token of something invisible*. He even saw nothing unscriptural in extreme unction *.

It is much to be wished, that as these five additional sacraments are now universally abandoned in all the reformed churches, christians would rectify their notions concerning the remaining two, and not consider them, as they did in the times of popish darkness, to be *outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace*. For that will always encourage the laying an improper stress upon them, to the undervaluing of that good disposition of mind, and those good works, which alone can recommend us to the favour of God, and to which only his especial grace and favour is annexed.

* Gilpin's Life of him, p. 66.

THE
HISTORY
OF THE
Corruptions of Christianity.

PART VIII.

*A History of the Changes that have been made in the
Method of conducting PUBLIC WORSHIP.*

THE INTRODUCTION.

THE subject of this part of my work is no very important article in the history of the corruptions of christianity, because mere *forms* are but of little consequence in religion, except when they are put in the place of something more substantial; and indeed too much of this will be found to have been the case in this business. It will, however, be a matter of curiosity to many persons, to see what changes have been made from time to time in the forms of christian worship; and therefore I did not omit to note such particulars concerning it, as happened to fall in my way, but without giving myself much trouble to look for them. It will seem, that in general, the same spirit dictated these variations, that led to other things of more importance to the essentials of religion. I shall begin with a few observations on the buildings in which christian assemblies were held, their appurtenances, &c.

SECTION I.

Of Churches, and some Things belonging to them.

AT first christians could have no places to assemble in but large rooms in private houses; and when they began to erect buildings for the purpose, it is most probable they were such as the Jews made use of for their synagogues; their manner of conducting public worship, as well as their regulations for the government of churches, being copied from the Jews; and as far as appears nothing more simple, or more proper, could have been adopted for the purpose.

Of the buildings themselves we know but little. The names that were originally given to these places of assembly, were the same as those of the Jewish synagogues, viz. *εκλησια* or *συναγωγα* that is *houses of prayer*, but afterwards they were called *κυριακα*, and in Latin *dominica*, whence came the German word *Thom* and the Flemish and English words *Church* and *Kirk*. These buildings were not called *temples* till the time of Constantine. But about that time, in imitation of the pagans, they called the magnificent buildings which were then erected for the purpose of public worship by that name. And these being generally made to enclose the tombs of martyrs, these tombs were called *altars*, on account of their bearing some resemblance to the altars of the heathen temples. And from this came the custom, at the end of the fourth century, of putting bones and other relics of martyrs in all those places which were used for the celebration of the Lord's supper, instead of the *wooden tables*, which were used for that purpose*.

When Constantine ordered the christian churches to be rebuilt, it was done with great pomp; and before they were used for the purpose of public worship, some ceremony of *consecration*, began to be used. But at

* Suetonius, A. D. p. 211,

first nothing more was done for that purpose, besides singing of psalms, preaching, and receiving the Lord's supper, that is, nothing more, in fact, than going through the usual forms of public worship, but probably with greater solemnity and devotion, followed by feasting and other marks of festivity; and it soon became the custom to repeat this festivity on the same day annually.

In 538, it appears, that the dedications of churches were sometimes made by sprinkling of holy water. For in that year pope Vigilius says that this ceremony was not necessary; it being sufficient for the consecration of churches to celebrate the eucharist, and deposit relics in them. But in 601, pope Gregory expressly ordered that holy water should be added. In 816, a synod was held at Canterbury, in which, besides these things it was ordered that the images of the saints, whose names the churches bore, should be painted upon the wall. From the year 1150 they added the signature of the cross, and other figures on the pavement and walls; and afterwards they traced on the pavement the Greek and Latin alphabet, in the form of a cross; and lastly they added the litany of the Virgin Mary and other saints *.

That some ceremony or some peculiar solemnity, should be used on the first making use of any building destined for the purpose of public worship, is natural, and certainly not improper, provided nothing more be implied in it, besides solemnly setting it apart for that particular and valuable purpose; and we find that solemn consecrations were made of the temple of Jerusalem, and of every thing belonging to the Jewish religion. But the ceremonies above-mentioned, shew that some peculiar virtue was ascribed to them, and that it was supposed they imparted a character of peculiar sanctity to the building itself. And that the bells in them (which served no other purpose originally, besides that of calling the people together) should have any form of consecration in churches is a little extra-

* Suetonius, A. D. 335.

ordinary. This, however, was done with much solemnity by John XIII. in 968.

There having been cast at that time a larger bell than had ever been made before for the church of Lateran at Rome, this pope sprinkled it with holy water, "blessed it, and consecrated it to God with holy ceremonies," from which is come the custom of consecrating all bells used in churches, and which the common people call *baptizing* them. Upon this occasion they pray that when the bell shall sound they may be delivered from the ambushes of their enemies, from apparitions, tempests, thunder, wounds, and every evil spirit. During the service, which is a very long one, they make many aspersions of holy water, and several unctions on the bells, both within and without; and at each unction they pray that the bell may be "sanctified and consecrated, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, to the honour of Emanuel, and under the patronage of such or such a saint *."

The idea of this ceremony, as almost of every other that was used by christians, was adopted from the pagan ritual, in which there was a solemn consecration of every instrument used in their worship. And indeed there were consecrations for the same purpose of every thing that was made use of in the worship of the Jews. But nothing in the heathen ritual, can equal the absurdity of this consecration of bells. For besides what is observed before, in order to make this ceremony a more proper *baptism*, (a name that was first most probably given to it by the vulgar, from the sprinkling of the bell with holy water) godfathers and godmothers were appointed on this occasion, to answer questions instead of the bell; and they pray that God would give the bell his Holy Spirit, that it may be sanctified for the purposes above-mentioned, and especially for driving away witches, and evil spirits; and preventing tempests in the air, which were supposed to be caused by those spirits. The bell had also a name given to it as in baptism †. I shall proceed to mention

* Sæur, A. D. 968. † Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 359.

other things which superstition has introduced into christian churches, and especially such as were borrowed from the pagan worship.

In popish churches the first thing that we are struck with is a vessel of what is called *holy water*, into which those who enter dip their finger, and then mark their foreheads with the sign of the cross. This holy water, there can be no doubt, came from the *lustral water* of the pagans, as indeed learned catholics allow. This water was also placed at the entrance of the heathen temples, and those who entered were sprinkled with it. The first express mention made of holy water among christians is in an epistle of Vigilius bishop of Rome, written in 538, in speaking of the consecration of churches, as was mentioned above; though some have thought that to have been holy water which Synesius mentions, as placed at the entrance of churches, for the purpose of washing their hands before prayer*. Middleton farther observes, that the composition of this holy water is the same with that of the heathens, viz. common salt and water; and also that the form of the *aspergillum*, or *asperforium*, is much the same with that which was formerly used by the pagans†.

A fondness for the *sign of the cross* was one of the first superstitions of christians. It was probably first used by way of distinguishing themselves from the heathens, or to shew the heathens that they were not ashamed of that with which they most reproached, viz. the crucifixion of their master. From this constant use of it they began to imagine that there was some peculiar virtue in the thing itself. They also imagined it to be alluded to in many passages of the Old Testament, and various rites of the Jewish religion, and they were also pleased to find the traces of it every where else. Hence came the custom of marking themselves with it, which is said to have been first done by the Valentinians, and then by the Montanists, of whom was Tertullian, who makes great boast of it. But it does not appear to have been used in the public offices of religion in the three first centuries, or that crosses

* Suetonius, A. D. 457. † Letters from Rome, p. 138.

made of wood or metal, were ever used till it was imagined that Helena, the mother of Constantine, had discovered the true cross in 326 *.

Burning *wax lights* in the day time was used in many heathen ceremonies, for which they are ridiculed by Lactantius. "The heathens," says he, "light up candles to God, as if he lived in the dark; and do not they deserve to pass for madmen, who offer lamps to the author and giver of light?" But not long after this, these very wax lights were introduced into christian worship.

Another thing that was noted by the early christians, as peculiar to the pagans, was *incense*. But so early as the third century, we find this also made use of in christian churches. And Middleton says, that even the *thuribulum* itself was taken into the service of the christian altar, together with the incense. They are mentioned by Ambrose and Chrysostom, as in common use, both in the eastern and western churches in their time †. But both wax lights and incense were first introduced into the eastern churches, and from them were adopted in the West.

Lastly, *processions*, which are conducted with great solemnity by the papists, were also copied from the heathen worship. Among the Romans they were instituted by Numa, and both in the pagan and popish processions, the chief magistrates often assisted ‡.

SECTION II.

Of Ceremonies in general, and other Things relating to Public Worship.

HAVING made the preceding observations on the *places* in which the public worship of christians was performed, and some other things and circumstances

* Larroche, p. 538. † Middleton's Letters, p. 237. ‡ Ib. p. 189.

belonging to them ; I proceed to give an account of what was transacted within the place ; but first I shall make a few general remarks on modes and forms in christian worship.

We may take it for granted that originally christians had no proper *ceremonies* in their worship. But after the sign of the cross, wax lights, and incense were introduced, the *ceremonial* of christian worship came to be as complex as that of the pagan worship had been. So much progress had been made in these things in the time of Austin, that he complained of it, saying that the church was so full of ceremonial observances, that the condition of the Jews under the Law, was much more supportable. But the church, he says, amidst much straw and tares bears many things *. But so much were ceremonies multiplied before the ninth century, that large treatises were then written to explain them.

There not being in the early ages of the church any power that could enforce uniformity in the methods of worship, it happened unavoidably, that different customs got established in different places. Hence every church of note had its peculiar *ritual*, which was adopted by all the churches that depended upon it ; and those of the East differed very considerably from those of the West.

The western church was loaded with ceremonies chiefly by Gregory the Great, in the sixth century. He had great fertility of invention in this respect, and eloquence to recommend his inventions ; but he did not impose them upon others, though perhaps for want of power. Almost every pope in the next century added something new to the ancient rites and institutions ; and in the time of Charlemagne, they were propagated through all the Latin churches.

No person urged this business so much as Gregory VII. especially with respect to Spain, where he met with the greatest opposition from the attachment of the people to their ancient Gothic or Mosarabic liturgy. But the pope carried his point at last, notwith-

* Epist. cxix. Cap. xix. Opera, vol. ii. p. 577.

standing two very remarkable decisions in favour of the Gothic liturgy, at the appointment of the nobles of Castile. They first ordered two champions to fight, one for each of them, when he that was for the Gothic ritual proved to be victorious. They then threw both the Missals into the fire, when the Roman was consumed, and the Gothic, they say, was taken out unhurt. Such was the method of determining most disputes in those days, viz. by an appeal, as they thought, to God, either by the sword, or some kind of *ordeal*, depending upon a divine interposition in the result of it.

At length, however, the Roman ritual was universally used in the western church. And the English reformers, instead of framing a new liturgy, had recourse to the offices of the church of Rome, leaving out what was most offensive.

There can be no doubt, but that originally, all the parts of public worship were performed in the language that was best understood by the assembly; and as the Latin tongue was best understood by the generality of christians in the West, this, of course, was generally, if not universally used. But after the irruption of the northern nations, the knowledge of this language was much less general, and in the tenth or eleventh century it was hardly understood at all. But from this time the use of the Latin tongue was continued for other reasons.

In those dark ages the clergy affected to keep the people in ignorance, and in a state of dependence upon themselves, and wished to make them think that the whole business of reconciling men to God was in their hands. The scriptures were likewise kept from the people, and the whole service was so loaded with ceremonies, that it had the appearance of a *charm*, the whole secret and virtue of which, was in the breast of the priest; and to continue the service in an unknown tongue contributed greatly to the impression which they wished to make. The Latin tongue still continues to be used in all the Roman catholic churches, notwithstanding several attempts have been made to remedy this great and glaring evil.

It is not however, peculiar to the church of Rome. For it is said that a veneration for antiquity induces the Egyptian christians to use the Coptic language in their church. Also the Jacobites and Nestorians use the Syriac language, and the Abyssinians the old Ethiopic, though all these languages have long since become obsolete and unintelligible to the multitude *. The Greeks also celebrate the Lord's supper in ancient Greek ; but this is sufficiently understood by the common people, the modern Greek not being very different from it.

The *habits* of the clergy could not, originally, have been any thing but the usual dress of their respective countries. But it not being thought decent for persons of such grave characters as the clergy, to follow new customs and fashions, they retained their old flowing garments, after the northern nations had introduced the use of short ones. But besides this, the habits of the pagan priests, which had always been different from those of other persons, at the time of their officiating, were probably imitated by the christian clergy, though I cannot say that I have met with any particular account of it.

We find, however, that the clergy were distinguished by their habits, while they were officiating, in the time of Sylvester, when mention is made of *Dulmatics* for the deacons, and of a certain cloth with which their left hand was to be covered. The fourth canon of the council of Carthage prescribed the use of the *cope* in reading the gospel, and at the time of the oblation only. And Gregory the Great invented new-fashioned habits, like those described in the ceremonial law of the Jews †.

* Mosheim vol. ii. p. 343.

† Larroche, p. 539. History of Ancient Ceremonies, p. 82.

SECTION III.

Of the proper Parts of Public Worship.

ORIGINALLY christians met to read the scriptures, to explain them, or to preach, to sing psalms, to pray, and to administer the Lord's supper. The *creed* was made use of only at baptism, when it was taught to all the catechumens, who were probably made to recite it after the person who administered the ordinance. Afterwards, when articles of faith were more attended to, and it behoved all the bishops to take care to prevent the growth of heresy, creeds began to be recited by the whole assembly. That this was the true reason of the present practice, is evident from its being the *Nicene creed*, and not that of *the apostles*, as it is called, that was first used for this purpose. It was also first introduced by Timothy, bishop of Constantinople, who did it in order to make Macedonius who rejected that creed, more odious to the people. This was in the reign of the emperor Anastasius, who died in 521. About this time this creed was also repeated in the church of Antioch every time the Lord's Supper was administered.

Before this time it had been the custom to repeat the creed only the day preceding Good Friday, when catechizing was more solemnly performed, in order to the celebration of baptism on the Easter Sunday following. The repetition of it on that day was first appointed by the council of Laodicea. But the constant reading of the creed did not take place in the West till about 590, when it was ordered by the council of Toledo, in imitation of the eastern churches. At this time it was the Nicene creed only that was made use of and for some time it seemed to eclipse that of the apostles; but afterwards this latter creed recovered its credit*.

It will be just worth while to mention a few particu-

* History of the Apostles Creed, p. 44, &c.

lars concerning the *posture* of the priest and people, during the celebration of the particular parts of public worship.

The usual posture of praying had been standing or kneeling, or to express great self-abasement and humility, prostration; but a canon had been made (for what reason I have not enquired) to forbid the practice of kneeling on Sundays from Easter to Whitsuntide, which gave rise to the term *stations*. This, however, was not approved by the church of Rome*. When the scriptures were read, it is probable that the people sat; but in time it became a custom for the people to stand while the *gospel* was reading. And it is said that Anastasius, bishop of Rome, who died in 402, ordered the priests to stand up and incline their heads a little, while they read the *gospel*†.

All the heathens contrived their temples so that they should pray with their faces towards the *East*. This was introduced into christian worship about the time of Jerom, though it was not then generally approved of. Pope Leo the Great condemned this custom, because it was much used by the Manicheans‡. By degrees, however, the custom of looking towards the East during the repetition of the creed became universal, and likewise the *bowing at the name of Jesus*, in the repetition of it. This practice was countenanced by the literal interpretation of Phil. ii. 10. *At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow*. This, however, was thought to be so very idle a superstition, that it was almost universally laid aside at the reformation. But it is generally practised in the church of England; and bishop Laud severely punished those who did not conform to this ceremony in his time.

Singing seems always to have been a part of the public worship of christians, and followed the reading of the scriptures. They sung either the psalms of David, or hymns of their own composing. But the former, Mosheim says, were only received among christian hymns in the fourth century. The singing of

* History of Ancient Ceremonies, p. 17.

† Sucur, A. D. 402. ‡ Ib. A. D. 443.

these psalms, or hymns, was also very common with them in their own houses, in the course of the week. But the method of singing by *antiphony* or *anthem*, that is, one part of the congregation, as the clergy, singing one verse, and the rest, or the people, singing another, is said to have been introduced about the middle of the fourth century, into the church of Antioch, by Flavianus and Diodorus, and into the church of Constantinople by Chrysostom *.

This method of singing was introduced into the church of Rome by Celestine in 418. Afterwards, Gregory the Great composed an *Antiphonary* for the whole year, with versicles, or responses for every day of it. He then appointed the college or choir of singing men, to chant the office †. In the fifth century it was the custom in some places, to keep up the exercises of singing both day and night, different sets of persons continually relieving each other ‡.

Musical instruments were not introduced into churches till the 13th. or 14th. century. Thomas Aquinas says, the church does not use musical instruments to praise God, lest she should seem to judaize §. But in 1312, Marinus Sanutus introduced organs into churches ||; and they have been much used ever since, though there have always been persons in all establishments; as well as in particular sects, who preferred a more simple mode of worship; and even admitting that music might assist in exciting devotional feelings, did not chuse that, in general they should depend upon that mechanical assistance.

In the primitive churches, preaching was nothing more than the exposition of the scriptures, a portion of which was always read in the course of the service. Origen is said to have been the first who did this in a more copious and diffusive manner, explaining the scripture in an allegorical way; and by this means introduced longer sermons than had been usual ¶.

* Sueur, A. D. 398. Peirce's Vindication, p. 390.

† History of Ancient Ceremonies, p. 81.

‡ Mosheim, vol. i. p. 397. § Peirce's Vindicat. p. 385. 395.

|| Jortin's Remarks, vol. v. p. 569. ¶ Mosheim, vol. i. p. 235.

When heathen philosophers and rhetoricians were converted to christianity, they introduced their custom of haranguing on particular subjects, and particular occasions, and carefully premeditated or precomposed their sermons; sometimes prefixing to their discourses short texts of scriptures, probably that they might not pass too suddenly from the old method of interpreting the sacred writings, and sometimes omitting them. In this style are the sermons of Chrysostom, consisting of such kind of eloquence as the Greeks and Romans were fond of displaying, when they harangued the populace, or pleaded at the bar.

So far did christian preachers in those times depart from the simplicity of the gospel, and so little were they influenced by the spirit of christianity, that, in imitation of the Grecian orators, some of them even hired persons to clap their hands, and express their applause by other gestures and vociferations at proper intervals, on signals previously concerted between them and the preacher, or his particular friends.

These set harangues were only occasional, and were by no means delivered every Lord's day, in every christian church; and in the dark ages, few persons being qualified to preach, sermons became very scarce. At this day the Roman catholics meet only, in general, to hear prayers, and to celebrate mass. They have no sermons, except in Lent, on certain festivals, and on some other particular occasions. It is more particularly observed, that it was in the ninth century that the bishops and priests ceased to instruct the people by sermons as they had done before *.

Charlemagne, finding the clergy absolutely incapable of instructing the people by sermons of their own, or of explaining, with perspicuity and judgment, those portions of scripture which are distinguished in the ritual by the name of *Epistle* and *Gospel*, ordered Paulus Diaconus and Alcuin to compile, from the ancient doctors of the church, *Homilies*, or discourses upon the epistles and gospels, which a stupid and ignorant set of priests were to commit to memory, and recite to the

* Sæcur, A. D. 853.

people. This gave rise to that famous collection, which went by the title of the *Homiliarium* of Charlemagne; and which being followed as a model by many productions of the same kind, composed by private persons, contributed much to nourish the indolence, says Mosheim, and to perpetuate the ignorance of a worthless clergy *. In this, however, as well as in his other regulations respecting the church, he certainly had the best intentions; and in those times it is probable that nothing better could have been done. A scheme of this kind was adopted in England when the present *book of homilies* was compiled, and appointed to be read in churches.

Before the reformation, after the preacher had named and opened his text, he called the people to go to their prayers, telling them what they were to pray for. "Ye shall pray," says he, "for the king, for the pope, for the holy catholic church, &c." after which all the people went over their beads in silence; and the minister kneeling down, did the same. They would besides say a *pater noster*, *Ave Maria*, *Deus misereatur nostri*, *Domine salvum fac regem*, *Gloria patri*, &c. and then the sermon proceeded †. The manner in which most of the English clergy pray in the pulpit before sermon is still the same; and is what they call *bidding prayers*, or an exhortation to pray for such and such things. But then no time is allowed for the prayers that are so ordered.

In the primitive church the public prayers followed the sermon, and preceded the celebration of the Lord's supper; and it is evident, from many circumstances, that at first all these prayers were delivered without book, and were such as the bishop, or the priest who officiated, could prepare himself. Justin Martyr says, that the president of the assembly offered prayers and thanksgivings, *as he was able*, (*ὡς ἂν δύναμις αὐτοῦ*). Origen also says, "We pray according to our abilities;" and Tertullian, We pray to God without a monitor, "because our prayers flow from our own minds." Basil gives an instance of a variation in his

* Vol. ii. p. 81. † Neal's Hist. i. p. 33.

prayer, for which he was blamed by some, as being inconsistent with himself *.

In time, however, partly in order to avoid diversity of opinions, and in part, also, that the congregation might not be offended by prayers prepared by persons who were not capable of doing it with propriety, it came to be the custom to compose the prayers before-hand, and to submit them to the approbation of the principal persons in the church. This was particularly ordered at the third council of Carthage.†

At the council of Laodicea, held in 364, the same prayers were ordered to be used morning and evening; but, in general, every bishop ordered what prayers he thought proper, till about the time of Austin; when it was ordered that, to prevent heresy, no prayers should be used but by common advice. Thus in time a great variety of *liturgies*, or forms of celebrating public worship were in use in different provinces, and different sees. The first mention we find of these liturgies is towards the end of the fourth century ‡.

In early times, though the officiating minister delivered the prayers, the people were not intirely silent; for they made small *interlocutions* or *responses*, as *Lift up your hearts. We lift them up unto the Lord*, mentioned by Cyprian. *The Lord be with you, and with thy spirit*, in the time of Chrysostom §.

The last circumstance that I shall notice, relating to the forms of public worship, is that in the primitive church, where the service always ended with communion, there was recited a *roll*, in which the names of the more eminent saints of the catholic church, and of the holy bishops, martyrs, or confessors, of every particular church, were registered. This was an honourable remembrance of such as had died in the christian faith. But when the soundness of any person's faith was questioned, his name was not read till that difficulty was removed. Chrysostom having been expelled from the church of Constantinople, it was a long time before his name was inserted in this roll.

* Peirce's Vindication, p. 429. † Sueur, A. D. 397.

‡ Neale's Hist. vol. i. p. 37. § Peirce's Vindication, p. 426.

This was the custom, by which as I have observed before, provision was made for excommunicating persons even after their death.

SECTION IV.

Of Festivals, &c. in the Christian Church.

THE primitive christians had no festivals besides Sunday, on which they always met for public worship, as may be inferred from Justin Martyr. This day Constantine ordered to be observed as a day of rest from labour; but husbandmen were allowed to cultivate the earth on that day *. By degrees, however, in imitation of the Jews or heathens, but chiefly the latter, christians came to have as many annual festivals as the heathens themselves. Of the principal of these I shall give a general account.

The first that was observed by christians was *Easter*, on the time of the Jewish passover, being the anniversary of our Saviour's sufferings, death, and resurrection. Originally, however, this was probably a *festival*, and respected the resurrection of our Saviour only; but afterwards they began to keep a *fast*, on the anniversary of the crucifixion; but it was a long time before this fast was extended, as it now is to the whole season of *Lent*, or forty days before Easter.

The primitive christians used, indeed, to join fasting to prayer upon extraordinary occasions; but this was always voluntary, and those who intirely omitted it were not censured. The first person who is said to have laid down any express rules for fasting, was Montanus, who was remarkable for his rigour in other respects. However, a fast on the anniversary of Christ's crucifixion, or what we call *Good Friday*, is of very great antiquity; but both the time, and the degree of

* Suetonius, A. D. 320.

fasting, was originally very various, depending upon each person's particular fancy. Irenæus says, that some persons fasted before Easter one day, some two, and some more; but that the unity of the faith was maintained notwithstanding that variety.

By fasting, the ancients always meant abstaining from meat and drink from morning till evening; and what Tertullian and others call *stations*, or half fasts, were those days on which they assembled for prayer in the morning, and continued that exercise till three in the afternoon, when they received the Lord's supper. They never fasted on a Saturday or Sunday, and even thought it a crime to do so, except on the Saturday before Easter-day, on which they celebrated the resurrection of Christ; because, during that time, they said, the bridegroom was taken from them.

Because the time that our Saviour lay in the grave was about forty hours, this fast was called *Quarantana* or *Quadragesima*, and by contracting *Quaresme*, and *Caresme* or *Carême*, which is the French term for *Lent*. Another reason for fasting at this particular time, was, that many persons were then preparing for baptism, and others for communion, which, as superstition prevailed, was frequented more generally, and attended upon with more solemnity, on that day.

Even the Montanists only fasted two weeks in the year; and in these they excepted Saturdays and Sundays*. *Lent* was first confined to a certain number of days in the fourth century. At this time, however, abstinence from flesh and wine was by many judged sufficient for the purpose of fasting, and from this time it prevailed in the western church†. Soon after the time of Tertullian, christians began to observe Wednesdays and Fridays for the purpose of fasting; and they kept these fasts all the year, except between Easter and Pentecost, in which time they neither fasted nor kneeled in churches. In 416, Innocent I. ordered that the people should fast on Saturdays; but the Greeks and all the East paid no regard to this ordinance‡.

* Suet., A. D. 206. † Mosheim, vol. i. p. 324.

‡ Suet., A. D. 391.

At the time of the council of Nice, the week before Easter was called *Quarantana*, or *Lent*; though some observed more days, and some fewer, at pleasure; but within forty years after this council, Lent was extended to three weeks*.

Durandus tells us that Lent was counted to begin on that which is now the first Sunday in Lent, and to end on Easter-eve, which time containing forty-two days, if you take out of them the six Sundays on which it was held to be unlawful to fast, there will remain only thirty-six days; and therefore that the number of forty days which Christ fasted might be completed, Gregory the Great added to Lent four days of the week preceding, viz. that which we call *Ash Wednesday*, and the three days following it; so that our present Lent is a superstitious imitation of our Saviour's fast of forty days†.

Before the council of Nice, there had been a great difference between the eastern and western churches about the time of keeping Easter, the christians in the East following the custom of the Jews, with whom the day on which the Paschal lamb was killed was always the fourteenth of their month Nisan, on whatever day of the week it happened to fall; but with the Latins Easter-day had always been the Sunday following, being the anniversary of our Saviour's resurrection. At the council of Nice the custom of the Latin church was established; and as astronomy was more cultivated in Egypt, it was given in charge to the bishop of Alexandria, to publish to the other churches the proper time of keeping Easter, by what were called *Paschal epistles*. For the same purpose afterwards the *Golden number* was invented‡.

Pentecost was a Jewish festival, celebrated fifty days after the passover; and being likewise distinguished in the christian history by the descent of the holy spirit, it was observed next after Easter; and, as far as appears, about the time of Tertullian. We call it *Whit-tide*. These are the only great festivals that chris-

* Sueur, A. D. 325. 364. † History of Popery, vol. i. p. 186.
‡ History of Ancient Ceremonies, p. 44.

tians were not at liberty to fix where they pleased. All the other festivals they fixed at those times of the year which the pagans used to observe with the greatest solemnity, with a view to facilitate their conversion to christianity.

The feast of *Christmas*, in commemoration of the nativity of Christ, is mentioned by Chrysostom as unknown at Antioch till within ten years of the time of his writing; and therefore he concluded that it had lately been introduced from Rome *. It was thought to be first observed by the followers of Basilides, and from them to have been adopted by the orthodox, in the fourth century, when the festival of *Christ's baptism* was introduced; in consequence of which this feast of the nativity was removed from the sixth of January, to the twenty-fifth of December: the former retaining the name of the *Epiphany*, which feast only, and not that of the nativity, is observed in the East †.

Festivals in honour of the apostles and martyrs are all of late date, none of them earlier than the time of Constantine, when magnificent temples were built round the tombs of some of their martyrs; and then the festivals were only held at the places where they were supposed to have suffered.

Vigils were the assemblies of the ancient christians by night, in the time of persecution, when they durst not meet in the day-time. Afterwards they were observed before Easter, but they were kept not as feasts, which was done afterwards, but as *fasts*, as appears from Tertullian.

The feast of *Ascension* was observed about the time of Austin. The feast of *Circumcision* is first mentioned by Maximus Taurinensis, who flourished in 450; and the feast of *Purification* was perhaps instituted in the ninth century ‡. The feast of *Advent* is of no earlier authority than that of Innocent III. in the thirteenth century; and the *Vigils* of the great festivals are all later than the tenth century §.

* Basnage Histoire des Eglises Reformées, vol. i. p. 280.

† Peirce's Vindication, p. 510.

‡ Ib. p. 512, &c.

§ Sueur, A. D. 392.

It was Mamert, bishop of Vienne in Gaul, who, about 463, first instituted the fast of *Rogation*, that is, the prayers that are made three days before the feast of Ascension, that is, the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before Holy Thursday; which was expressly contrary to the order established in the ancient church, forbidding all fasting between Easter and Pentecost. This fast of Rogation was generally received in the West presently after the time of this Mamert *. The bishop of Vence added the processions to them, in imitation of the *Lustrationes Ambervales* of the heathens, which were made round their fields, in order to render them fruitful; and these were attended with much intemperance and disorder; being made, no doubt, in all respects, after the pagan manner.

Alcinus Avitus, who succeeded Hefychius, the immediate successor of Mamert, in the church of Vienne, describes the occasion of instituting this fast in his homily on the Rogation. He there says that the city of Vienne had suffered much by fire, thunder storms, earthquakes, extraordinary noises in the night, prodigies, signs in the heavens, wild beasts, and other calamities; that on this the bishop of the city ordered the people to fast three days with prayer and repentance, that, by the example of the Ninevites, they might avert the judgments of God. He says that thereupon the anger of God was appeased, and that in commemoration of it Mamert ordered this fast to be observed every year. His example was soon followed, first by the church of Clermont in Auvergne, then by all their neighbours, and afterwards throughout all Gaul. In 801, Leo III. confirmed this fast, and made it universal †.

The fast of *Ember Weeks*, or *Fejunia quatuor temporum*, was probably instituted a little before Leo the Great, in the middle of the fifth century ‡. But others think that it is not quite certain that he speaks of it §. Some say that pope Gelasius having ordered that the ordination of priests and deacons should be on

* Sueur, A. D. 392. † Sueur, A. D. 462. 463.

‡ Peirce's Vindication, p. 529. § Sueur, A. D. 392.

the four weeks of Ember, or ember days, viz. the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday after the first Sunday in Lent, after Whitsunday, after the fourteenth of September, and the thirteenth of December, and this ceremony being always conducted with fasting and prayer, it came to be a custom to fast at that time *.

It was upon the idea of the spiritual benefit that would arise from visiting the church of St. Peter at Rome, and also in imitation of the Jewish jubilee, and the secular games among the Romans, that the popish *Jubilee* is founded. This festival, which is celebrated with the utmost pomp and magnificence, was instituted by Boniface VIII. in the year 1300, in consequence, as it is said, of a rumour, the origin of which is not known, which was spread among the inhabitants of Rome, in 1299, that all who within the limits of the following year, should visit the church of St. Peter, should receive the remission of all their sins, and that this privilege would be annexed to the same observance every hundredth year.

The successors of Boniface added a number of new rites and inventions to this superstitious institution, and finding by experience that it added lustre to the church of Rome, and increased its revenue, they made its return more frequent. In 1350, Clement VI. ordered that the jubilee should be celebrated every fifty years, on pretence that the Jews did the like, and Paul II. in the fifteenth century, reduced the term to twenty-five years. This year of jubilee is called a *holy year*; but, as the author of the *Histoire des papes* observes, it should rather be called the year of sacrilege, impiety, debauch, and superstition †.

Many of these festivals have been retained by the reformers, especially those of Easter, Whitsuntide, and Christmas, and, like the papists, they observe them with more strictness than they do the Sundays.

Our established church has by no means thrown off the popish superstition with respect to fasting. The fast days in the church of England, are all the Fridays in the year except Christmas day, all the days in Lent,

* Hist. of Ancient Ceremonies, p. 67. † Vol. v. p. 409.

which, besides Fridays, are thirty-three, six more in the Ember weeks, three Rogation days, and the thirtieth of January. The sum of all the festival days is thirty-one. And if to these we add the ninety-five fast days, fifty-two Sundays, and twenty-nine saints days, all the days in a year appropriated to religious exercises, besides vigils, will be one hundred and seventy-eight; and making allowance for some of them interfering with others, they will be about one hundred and seventy*.

In so little esteem, however, are those observances held by the more enlightened members of the established church, that there can be no doubt but that when any reformation takes place, a great retrenchment will be made in this article.

THE
HISTORY
OF THE
Corruptions of Christianity.

PART IX.

The History of CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

THE INTRODUCTION.

THE changes which the discipline of the christian church underwent from the time of the apostles to the reformation, were as great, and of as much importance.

* Peirce's Vindication, p. 508.

in practice, as the changes in any other article relating to christianity. From being highly favourable to good conduct, the established maxims of it came at length to be a cover for every kind of immorality, to those who chose to avail themselves of them. On this account I have given a good deal of attention to the subject.

To many persons, I doubt not, this will be as interesting an object as any thing in the history of christianity, and to introduce it in this place will make the easiest connection between the two great divisions of my work, I mean the corruptions of *doctrine*, and the abuses of *power* in the christian church. It will also serve to shew in what manner these departures from the christian system promoted each other.

SECTION I.

The History of Church Discipline in the Time of the Christian Fathers.

IN the purer ages of the church, the offences which gave public scandal were few; but when they did happen, they were animadverted upon with great rigour. For as many enormities were laid to the charge of christians, they were exceedingly solicitous to give no just cause of obloquy. It is, indeed, probable, that some time after the apostolic age, the morals of the christians in general were more strict, than we find, by the writings of the apostles, they were in their own times. Nor is it to be wondered at, when we consider that the whole body of the gentile christians, being then newly converted from heathenism, must have retained many of their former habits, or have easily relapsed into them.

Afterwards, most of the cases of scandal we meet with relate to the behaviour of christians in the time of persecution, from which many shrunk or fled, in a

manner that was exceedingly and justly disapproved by the more severe. Consequently, after a persecution, there was much to do about the re-admission to the privileges of church communion, of those who repented of their weakness; and it was a great part of the business of the councils in the fourth and fifth centuries (which was after the establishment of christianity) to settle rules concerning the degrees of penance, and the method of receiving penitents into the church. Indeed, besides the cases of those who had shrunk from persecution, the governors of christian churches at that time must have had many offences of other kinds to animadvert upon; considering that christianity had then the countenance of the civil powers, and therefore that people of all ranks, and of all characters, would naturally crowd into it. On these accounts they found it necessary to have a very regular system of discipline.

In general, we find that about the third and fourth centuries, christians distinguished four orders of penitents. The first stood at the entrance of the church, begging in the most earnest manner the prayers of all that went in. The second were admitted to enter, and to hear the lectures that were given to the catechumens and the exposition of the scriptures, but they were dismissed, together with the catechumens, before the celebration of the eucharist. The third lay prostrate in a certain place in the church, covered with sackcloth and after receiving the benediction of the bishop, and the imposition of hands, were also dismissed before the celebration of the eucharist. The fourth order attended that celebration but did not partake of it. Penitents having passed through all these orders, were admitted to communion by the imposition of the hands of the bishop, or of a priest in the presence of the whole congregation*.

If any persons relapsed into the same fault for which they had been excommunicated, or excluded from the congregation of the faithful, they were not re-admitted to communion, except in the article of death; but

* Sueur, A. D. 213.

towards the end of the seventh century the ancient discipline began to be relaxed in this respect, and they admitted persons to communion after a second offence. In all times there were some crimes for which no repentance could make atonement, so that persons who had been once guilty of them could never be admitted to the peace and communion of the church. These were murder, adultery, and apostacy. In this manner, at least, were these crimes stigmatized, in many churches.

But about the third century pope Zephyrinus began to relax a little of this discipline, admitting adulterers to communion after some years of penance, in which he was vehemently opposed by Tertullian. However, in the time of Cyprian, the penalties imposed by the bishop, which were always a public appearance for a certain time in the character of *penitents*, were often relaxed, or abridged, at the entreaty of the confessors, or those who had been destined to martyrdom; and this was called *indulgence*, of the abuse of which we shall see enough in a later period. But at this there was not much to complain of in this business, except the improper interference of these confessors, and the too great influence which they were allowed to have in such cases.

Equally innocent was the business of *confession*, as it was first begun; but we see in the course of this history, that it is no uncommon thing for an innocent beginning to lead to a fatal catastrophe. The apostle Paul exhorts christians to confess their sins one to another; and our Saviour assures us that we must forgive, as we hope to be forgiven. Upon this was grounded the custom of the primitive churches, to require every person who was excommunicated, to make a public confession of his guilt before he was re-admitted to christian communion. In some cases, also, a public confession prevented excommunication. It was, likewise, the custom for many conscientious persons to confess their private sins to some of the priests in whom they could put the greatest confidence, and whose advice and prayers they wished to have; and what was at first a voluntary thing, was afterwards, but indeed long afterwards, imposed as a positive duty.

Confession was also much encouraged by another circumstance. Many canons made a difference in the degree and time of penance, between those who had accused themselves, and those against whom their crimes were proved. Many persons, therefore, to prevent the severer penalty, came of their own accord to confess their sins; and this was much encouraged, and the virtue of it magnified by the writers of those times. This confession was, originally, always made in public, but sometimes inconveniencies being found to attend this (especially when the crimes affected other persons, or the state) a private confession was appointed instead of it. In this case the bishop either attended himself, or appointed some particular priest, who from this office got the title of *penitentiary priest*, to receive these confessions.

The difficulty of re-admission to the privileges of the church communion was in general, very great, and the penances imposed were exceedingly rigorous, and this, in the end, was one great cause of the total relaxation of all discipline.

Novatian particularly distinguished himself by refusing to admit to communion any who had been guilty of the greater crimes, especially that of apostacy, leaving them to the judgment of God only. This arose from the rigour of Tertullian and the Montanists; and it is observable that the church of Rome still keeps up this rigorous discipline in cases of *heresy*, the *re-lapsed* being delivered to the secular arm, without being admitted to penance.

It was ordained by the council of Nice, that those who apostatized before baptism should not be admitted to the communion of the church till after three years of penance, but if they had been of the *faithful*, the penance was to continue seven years *. Basil decided that for the crime of fornication, a man ought to do penance four years. Others for the same offence imposed a penance of nine years, and for adultery eighteen years †.

* Sueur, A. D. 325,

† Basnage Histoire des Eglises Reformées, vol. i. p. 189.

Hitherto we have seen nothing but rigour, and the relaxation did not begin by lessening the time of penance (except in those cases in which the confessors had improperly interfered) but first in the manner of making the confession, then in the place of penance, and lastly in the commutation of it.

After the persecution under the emperor Decius, the orthodox bishops, Socrates says, appointed that the penitents should make their confessions to one particular priest, and that they should make a public confession of such things only as should be thought proper for public hearing. This custom continued in the eastern church till the year 390, when Nestarius the bishop of Constantinople abolished the office of penitentiary priests, on account of a woman having been enticed to commit adultery with a deacon of the church, whilst she stayed to perform the duties of fasting and prayer, which had been enjoined her. From this time all confessions, public and private, seem to have been discontinued in the Greek church; and at this day, it is said, that the Greeks make confession to God only.

In the western church public confession continued till the fifth century, but at that time those offenders who had been used to make public confession of their crimes, were allowed by Leo the Great to confess them privately, to a priest appointed for that purpose. By this means a great restraint upon vice was taken away, and the change was as pleasing to the sinner, as it was advantageous to the priests in several respects. Of this many persons at that time were sufficiently aware; and we find that in 590, a council held at Toledo forbade confession to be made privately to a priest, and ordered that it should be made according to the ancient canons.

To confession in private soon succeeded the doing penance in private, which was another great step towards the ruin of the ancient discipline, which required, indeed, to be moderated, but in a different manner. In the fifth century, however, penitents were suffered to do penance secretly in some monastery, or other private place, in the presence of a few persons, at the discretion of the bishop, or of the confessors, after-

which absolution was also given in private. This was the only method which they ventured to take with those who would not submit to the established rules of the church. But in the seventh century, all the public penance for secret sins was quite taken away, and Theodore archbishop of Canterbury is said to have been the first of all the bishops of the western church who established this rule*.

Had christians contented themselves with admonishing and finally excommunicating those who were guilty of notorious crimes, and with requiring public confession, with restitution in case of injustice, and left all private offences to every man's own conscience, no inconvenience would have arisen from their discipline. But by urging too much the importance of confession, and by introducing corporeal austerities, as fasting, &c. as a proper mode of penance, and then changing these for alms, and in fact for money, in a future period, paved the way for the utter ruin of all good discipline; and at length brought it to be much worse than a state of no discipline at all. However, we have yet seen but the first steps in this fatal progress.

SECTION II.

Of the State of Church Discipline in the dark Ages, and till the Reformation.

WE have seen several symptoms of the change and decay of discipline in the last period; but in this we shall see the total ruin of it, in consequence of the increased operation of the same causes, and the introduction of several new ones.

After the introduction of *private confession*, it was complained by a council held at Challons, in 813, that persons did not confess their offences fully, but only in part; and therefore they ordered, that the priest should make particular *inquiry*, under such heads

* Burnet on the Articles, p. 346.

as were thought to include the principal vices that men were addicted to. At this time, however, confession was not reckoned necessary to salvation, and was not made in order to obtain absolution of the priest, but to inform persons how they ought to conduct themselves with respect to God, in order to obtain pardon of him; and therefore the Fathers of this council say that confession to God purges sin, but confession to the priest teaches how sins are purged *.

This business of confession to priests, before it was held to be of universal obligation, gave rise to a new kind of casuistry, which consisted in ascertaining the nature of all kinds of crimes, and in proportioning the penalties to each. This improvement is ascribed to Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, above mentioned, who, in a work intitled *the Penitential*, regulated the whole business of penance, distinguishing the different kinds of crimes, and prescribing forms of consolation, exhortation, and absolution, adopted to each particular case. From Britain these regulations were soon introduced into all the western provinces, and the *Penitential of Theodore* became a pattern for other works of the same nature. But in the next century this business greatly declined, and gave way to the doctrine of indulgences †.

However, what is now properly called *auricular confession* was not fully established, and made of universal obligation, before the thirteenth century, when Innocent III. appointed it by his own authority, in a Lateran council. This doctrine, as it is now received in the church of Rome, requires not only a general acknowledgment, but a particular enumeration of sins, and of follies; and is appointed to be made to a proper priest once at least every year, by all persons who are arrived at years of discretion. Before this law of Innocent, several doctors had considered confession as a duty of divine authority, but it was not publicly received as a doctrine of the church. This law occasioned the introduction of a number of new injunctions and rites ‡.

* Sæur, A. D. 813. † Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 267.
‡ Ib. vol. iii. p. 94. 290.

It being notorious to all persons, that all useful church discipline was lost at the time of the reformation, it was thought proper at the council of Trent to do, or at least to seem to do something in the business; and therefore it was ordered that scandalous offenders should do public penance, according to the ancient canons, and that the bishops should be judges of it. But things had gone on so long in a different train, that it does not appear that any thing was done in consequence of it.

Together with this change in the business of confession, other causes were at the same time operating to the corruption of church discipline, but nothing contributed to it more than the stress which was then laid upon many things foreign to real virtue, and which were made to take the place of it. Of this nature were the customary devotions of those days, consisting in the frequent repetition of certain prayers, in bodily austerities, in pilgrimages, in alms to the poor, and donations to the church, &c. These were things that could be *ascertained*, so that it might be known with certainty whether the party had conformed to the penalty or not; whereas a *change of heart and of character* was a thing of less obvious nature, and indeed not much attended to by the generality of confessors at that time.

About the end of the eighth century the *commutation of penances* began, and instead of the ancient severities, *vocal prayers* came to be all that was enjoined, so many *Paters* (or repetitions of the Lord's prayer) were held to be equivalent to so many days fasting, &c. and the rich were allowed to buy off their penances by giving alms. Also the getting many masses to be said was thought to be a mode of devotion by which God was so much honoured, that the commutation of penance for masses was much practised. Pilgrimages and wars came on afterwards*.

The immediate cause of this commutation of penances was the impossibility of performing them, according to the canons of the church; since, in many cases it required more time than the term of human life. For

* Burnet on the Articles, p. 346.

instance, a ten years penance being enjoined for a murder, a man who had committed twenty murders, must have done penance two hundred years; and therefore some other kind of penance was judged absolutely necessary; and the person who was chiefly instrumental in settling the commutations of penance was one Dominic, who communicated them to the celebrated Peter Damiani, whose authority in the age in which he lived was very great.

By them it was determined that a hundred years of penance might be compensated by twenty repetitions of the psalter, accompanied with discipline, that is, the use of a whip on the naked skin. The computation was made in the following manner. Three thousand strokes with the whip were judged to be equivalent to a year of penance, and a thousand blows were to be given in the course of repeating ten psalms. Consequently, all the psalms, which are one hundred and fifty, were equivalent to five years of penance, and therefore twenty psalters to one hundred years. It is amusing enough at this day, and in a protestant country, to read that Dominic easily dispatched this task in six days, and thus discharged some offenders for whom he had undertaken to do it. Once at the beginning of Lent, he desired Damiani to impose upon him a thousand years of penance, and he very nearly finished it before the end of the same Lent. Damiani also imposed upon the archbishop of Milan a penance of an hundred years, which he redeemed by a sum of money to be paid annually*. Though Peter Damiani was the great advocate for this system of penance, he did not deny the novelty of it†.

Fleury acknowledges that when the penances were made impossible, on account of the multitude of them, they were obliged to have recourse to compensations and estimations, such as these repetitions of psalms, bowings, scourgings, alms, pilgrimages, &c. things, as he observes, that might be performed without conversion. However, in a national council in England, held in 747, penances performed by others were for-

* Fleury, A. D. 1059. † *Ib.* vol. xiii. p. 100.

bidden *. This enormity was too great to be admitted even in these ignorant and licentious ages, but it must have gained some considerable ground before it was checked by public authority.

The monks becoming confessors contributed greatly to the ruin of ecclesiastical discipline. They, knowing nothing of the ancient canons, introduced a certain *casuistry* by which many crimes were excused, and absolution was made easy in all cases; no persons being ever refused, or put off, after ever so many relapses. This relaxed casuistry is the most prevalent in those countries in which the inquisition is established; where if a person does not make his confession, and consequently receive his absolution, regularly, he is excommunicated, and at length declared suspected of heresy, and prosecuted according to law †.

Another thing that greatly promoted the ruin of discipline, and the encouragement of licentiousness, in the middle ages, was the protection given to criminals who took refuge in churches, which was a custom borrowed from paganism; this right of *Asylum* being transferred from the heathen temples to christian churches by the first christian emperors. In the barbarous times of antiquity, the *rights of hospitality* were held so sacred, that it was even deemed wrong to give up to public justice a criminal who had thrown himself under the protection of any person who was capable of screening him. This privilege was, of course, extended to the temples, which were considered as the houses of their Gods; and so sacred was it esteemed, that, in cases of the greatest criminality, all that it was thought lawful to do, was to take off the roof of the temple, and leave the wretch who had taken refuge in it to perish with hunger and the inclemency of the weather.

The abuse of this rite of asylum, when it was transferred to christian churches, was complained of by Chrysostom, who persuaded the emperor to revoke the privileges which had been granted by his predecessors. But they were restored, extended, and established afterwards, especially by Boniface V. in the seventh cen-

* Fleury, p. 43. † Fleury's, eighth Discourse, p. 42.

ture *, and were the subject of great complaints in many countries, especially in England, where the churches and church-yards were in a manner crowded with debtors and criminals of all kinds. Complaint being made on this subject in the time of Henry VII. the pope ordered that if any person who had taken refuge in an asylum should leave it, and commit a new crime, or repeat his old one, he should be deprived of the privilege †. It must be observed, that crosses on the public road, and various other things and places, which had the reputation of being *sacred*, had, by degrees, got this privilege of asylum, as well as churches. In later times, any criminal was safe from the pursuit of justice within the precincts of the palace of any cardinal; but Urban V. reformed that abuse ‡.

Among the Jews the privilege of asylum was a wise institution, and came in aid of the principle of justice: as it only protected a person who pleaded that he had killed another inadvertently, so that the relations of the deceased could not hurt him, till a regular inquiry had been made into the fact; but he was delivered up to justice if it appeared that the murder was a wilful one. Besides, this asylum was not granted to the temple in particular, but to certain towns, most conveniently situated for that purpose, in different parts of the country.

Another source of great corruption in discipline was the abuse of pilgrimages. These were undertaken at first out of curiosity, or a natural reverence for any place that had been distinguished by important transactions. They began to be common about the fourth century, and it appears by the writers of that time, that some weak people then valued themselves on having seen such places, and imagined that their prayers would be more favourably heard there than elsewhere. But in latter times much more stress was laid upon these things, and in the eighth century pilgrimages began to be enjoined by way of penance, and at length the pilgrimage was often a warlike expedition into the

* Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 28. † Hist. des Papes, vol. iv. p. 273.

‡ Memoires pour la vie de Petrarch, vol. iii. p. 676.

Holy Land, or service in some other of the wars in which the ambition of the popes was interested. By this means all the use even of the pilgrimage itself, as a penance, was wholly lost. For, as Mr. Fleury observes, a penitent marching alone was much more free from temptations to sin than one who went to the wars in company; and some of these penitents even took dogs and horses along with them, that they might take the diversion of hunting in these expeditions*.

Solitary pilgrimages were, however, much in fashion, and we find some very rigorous ones submitted to by persons of great eminence in those superstitious times; when it was a maxim, that nothing contributed so much to the health of the soul, as the mortification of the body. In 997, an emperor of Germany by the advice of the monks went bare-footed to mount Garganus, famous for the supposed presence of the archangel Michael, as a penance.

Before the eighth century it had been the custom to confine penitents near the churches, where they had no opportunity of relapsing into their offences; but in this century pilgrimages, and especially distant ones, began to be enjoined under the idea that penitents should lead a *vagabond life*, like Cain. This, however, was soon abused; as, under this pretence, penitents wandered about naked, and loaded with irons, and therefore it was forbidden in the time of Charlemagne. But still it was the custom to impose upon penitents pilgrimages of established reputation, especially that to the Holy Land, to which there was a constant resort from all parts of Europe. This was the foundation of the *Crusades* †.

Of all the consequences of the Crusades, the most important to religion was the discontinuance which they occasioned of the ancient canonical penance. For a man who was not able to serve in the Crusades was allowed to have the same benefit by contributing to the expences of those who did. Though the Crusades are over, the canonical penances are not returned ‡.

* Fleury's sixth Discourse, p. 27. † Fleury, vol. xiii. p. 22.

‡ Ib. p. 29.

Fleury also observes, that *plenary indulgences* had their origin with the Crusades; for till then it had never been known that by any *single work* the sinner was held to be discharged from all the temporal punishments that might be due from the justice of God. Commutations of penance for pilgrimages to Rome, Compostella, or Jerusalem, had been in use before, and to them, he says, the Crusades added the dangers of war*. Besides the wars against the Mahometans, the Crusaders, in the course of their expeditions, had frequent differences with the Greek emperor; and then the preservation of the Roman empire against the schismatical Greeks was held to be as meritorious as fighting against the Turks themselves; and this merit was soon applied to all wars which the popes esteemed to be of importance to religion, especially those against heretics, as the Albigenes in France†.

As it was the abuse of indulgences that was the immediate cause of the reformation by Luther, it may be worth while to go a little back to consider the rise and progress of them. It has been observed in a former period, that all that was meant by *indulgences* in the primitive times, was the relaxation of penance in particular cases, especially at the intercession of the confessors. From this small beginning, the nature of it being at length quite changed, the abuse grew to be so enormous, that it could no longer be supported; and the fall of it occasioned the downfall of a great part of the papal power.

As an expression of penitence and humiliation, a variety of penances, and some of them of a painful and whimsical nature, had been introduced into the discipline of the church. At first they were voluntary, but afterwards they were imposed, and could not be dispensed with but by the leave of the bishop, who often sold dispensations or indulgences, and thereby raised great sums of money. In the twelfth century the popes, observing what a source of gain this was to the bishops, limited their power, and by degrees drew the whole business of indulgences to Rome. And after

* Fleury's sixth Discourse, p. 6. † Ib. p. 16.

remitting the temporal pains and penalties to which sinners had been subjected, they went at length so far as to pretend to abolish the punishment due to wickedness in a future state.

To complete this business, a *book of rates* was published, in which the sums that were to be paid into the apostolical chamber for absolution for particular crimes were precisely stated. This practice entirely set aside the use of the books called *Penitentials*, in which the penances annexed to each crime were registered.

So long as nothing was pretended to be remitted but the temporal penances which it had been usual to enjoin for certain offences, no great alarm was given, and no particular reason was thought necessary for the change; the payment of a sum of money being a *temporal evil*, as well as bearing a number of lashes, or walking barefoot, &c. and this commutation was admitted with more ease, as it was pretended, that all the treasure raised by this means was applied to sacred uses, and the benefit of the church. But when the popes pretended to remit the future punishment of sin, and to absolve from the *guilt* of it, some other foundation was necessary; and this they pretended to find in the vast stock of merit which had accrued to the church from the good works of saints and martyrs, besides what were necessary to insure their own salvation. These pretended merits still belonged to the church, and formed a *treasure*, which the popes had the power of dispensing. This doctrine was greatly improved and reduced into a system by Thomas Aquinas. And afterwards, to the merits of the saints and martyrs were added, those of Christ, as increasing the treasure of the church.

Among other things advanced by cardinal Cajetan in support of the doctrine of indulgences, in his controversy with Luther on the subject, he said, that one drop of Christ's blood being sufficient to redeem the whole human race, the remaining quantity that was shed in the garden, and upon the cross, was left as a legacy to the church, to form a treasure, from which indulgences were to be drawn, and administered by the Roman pontiffs *.

* Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 311.

Though in this something may be allowed to the heat of controversy, the doctrine itself had a sanction of a much higher authority. For Leo X. in 1518, decreed that the popes had the power of remitting both the crime and the punishment of sin, the crime by the sacrament of penance, and the temporal punishment by indulgences, the benefit of which extended to the dead as well as to the living; and that these indulgences are drawn from the superabundance of the merits of Jesus Christ and the saints, of which treasure the pope is the dispenser*.

This Leo X. whose extravagance and expences had no bounds, had recourse to these indulgences, among other methods of recruiting his exhausted finances; and in the publication of them he promised the forgiveness of all sins, past, present, or to come; and however enormous was their nature. These he sold by wholesale to those who endeavoured to make the most of them; so that passing, like other commodities, from one hand to another, they were even hawked about in the streets by the common pedlars, who used the same artifices to raise the price of these commodities, as of any other in which they dealt.

One Texel, a Dominican friar, particularly distinguished himself in pushing the sale of these indulgences. Among other things, in the sermons and speeches which he made on this occasion, he used to say, that, if a man had even lain with the mother of God, he was able, with the pope's power, to pardon the crime; and he boasted that he had saved more souls from hell by these indulgences, than St. Peter had converted to christianity by all his preaching†. There would be no end of reciting the blasphemous pretensions of the vendors of these indulgences, with respect to the enormity of crimes, the number of persons benefited by them, or the time to which they extended. Bishop Burnet had seen an indulgence which extended to ten thousand years. Sometimes indulgences were affixed to particular churches and altars, and to particular times or days, chiefly to the year of Jubilee. They are also affixed to such things

* *Histoire des Papes*, vol. iv. p. 407. † *Mosheim*, vol. iii. p. 304.

as may be carried about with a person, as *Agnus Dei's*, to medals, rosaries, or scapularies. They are also affixed to some prayers, the devout repetition of them being a means of procuring great indulgences. The granting of all these is left intirely to the discretion of the pope *.

Such scandalous excesses as these excited the indignation of Luther, who first preached against the abuse of indulgences only, then, in consequence of meeting with opposition, against indulgences themselves, and at length against the papal power that granted them.

Before this time the council of Constance had, in some measure, restrained the abuse of indulgences, and particularly had made void all those that had been granted during the schism †. But it appears, that, notwithstanding these restraints, the abuses were greater than ever in the time of Leo X.

The council of Trent allowed of indulgences in general terms, but forbad the selling of them, and referred the whole to the discretion of the pope; so that, upon the whole, the abuse was established by this council. But though the reformation may not have produced any formal decisions in the church of Rome against the abuse of indulgences so as to affect the *doctrine* of them, the *practice* has been much moderated; and at present it does not appear that much more stress is laid upon such things by catholics in general, than by protestants themselves.

Some remains of the doctrine of indulgences are retained in the church of England, in which the bishops have a power of dispensing with the marriage of persons more near a kin than the law allows; which is, in fact, to excuse what they themselves call the *crime of incest*. But there is something much more unjustifiable in the power of *absolution*, or an authoritative declaration of the forgiveness of sin, which is also retained from the church of Rome. For after confession, the priest is directed to absolve a sick person in this form of words: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has left power" to his church to absolve all sinners who truly repent

* Burnet on the Articles, p. 285. † Lenfant, vol. i. p. 438.

“ and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee
 “ thine offences ; and by his authority committed to
 “ me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of
 “ the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”
 This is exactly a popish absolution, and is therefore
 liable to all the objections to which popish absolutions
 and indulgences are liable. One that is not in priest’s
 orders cannot pronounce this absolution.

Whatever was meant by the power of absolution
 communicated by Christ to the apostles, there is no-
 thing said in the New Testament of its being commit-
 ted to the ordinary ministers of the church, so that it
 must have been confined to the apostles only ; and we
 have no example even of their exercising any such au-
 thority as the church of Rome, or that of England
 pretends to. It is in vain to apologize for this form of
 absolution, by saying that the pardon of sin is only
 promised to the *penitent*, for then what occasion was
 there for mentioning any power committed to the
 clergyman with respect to the absolution, unless he be
 at least supposed to know the heart, and thereby be
 enabled to judge with certainty whether any person be
 a true penitent, and a proper object of mercy, or not.
 If the form has any meaning at all, it must imply that
 it is in the power of the priest to absolve, or not to
 absolve, as he shall think proper, which is certainly
 great presumption and impiety.

In many other respects the discipline of the church
 of England is very imperfect, and the wisest members
 of her communion, as well as those among the papists,
 lament the evil without seeing any prospect of a reme-
 dy. The business of auricular confession, and also
 that of private penance, is entirely abolished ; but the
bishops courts remain, which by mixing things of a
 civil with those of an ecclesiastical nature, are of great
 disservice to both. And whereas by the rules of these
 courts, public penance is enjoined for certain offences,
 persons are allowed to commute them for sums of
 money.

SECTION III.

Of the Method of enforcing Church Censures, or the History of Persecution, till the Time of Austin.

HAVING traced the general course of church discipline, in all its changes, from the time of the apostles to the reformation, it may not be amiss to go over the same ground once more, with a view to consider the methods that have been from time to time taken, in order to enforce the censures of the church; and in this we shall have occasion to lament, among other things, the most horrid abuse of both ecclesiastical and civil power; while men were continually attempting to do by force what it is not in the power of force to do, viz. to guide the conscience, or even to compel an outward conformity, in large bodies of people, to the same religious profession. Of this interference of the civil power in the business of religion, we shall see the first steps in this period, in which a great deviation was made from the admirable simplicity of the rules laid down by our Saviour.

In order to prevent the progress of vice, and in any case to preserve the reputation of christian societies, our Lord laid down a most excellent rule, as a general instruction for the conduct of his disciples; namely, first to admonish an offending brother in the most private and prudent manner. If that was not effectual, one or two more were to give their sanction to the reproof; if that failed, the case was to come under the cognizance of the whole congregation; and if the offender proved obstinate and refractory in this last instance, he was to be expelled from the society, in consequence of which the church was discharged from all farther attention to his conduct, and he was considered in the same light as if he had never belonged to it. Such,

and so admirably simple, and well adapted to its end, was the system of discipline in the constitution of the christian church; and for some time it was strictly adhered to, and the effects of it were great and happy. By this means christians effectually *watched over one another in love, exhorting one another daily, and not suffering sin in each other.* Thus also by forming regular bodies, they became more firmly united and attached to one another, and their zeal for the common cause was greatly increased.

Besides admonition and reproof, private and public, the primitive christians had no method of enforcing the observance of christian duties. If this failed, nothing remained but *excommunication*, or cutting off the vicious or refractory member from any visible relation to them, or connection with them. And, indeed, considering the valuable advantages resulting to every particular member from the rest of the body, a formal exclusion, and as it necessarily must have been, an ignominious exclusion, from a christian society, could not but have been regarded, even without any superstition, as a very awful thing.

It was generally concluded, that the censures of the church, passed in a solemn and unanimous manner, would be ratified at the tribunal of Christ at the last day; so that a person cut off from the communion of the church here would be excluded from heaven hereafter. And indeed, if a man's conduct were such as exposed him to this censure of his fellow christians, of whose kindness and affection he had abundant experience, and when they were under no bias or prejudice in giving their judgment, it is probable that it would be just, and therefore be ratified in heaven; and we may presume that, in the primitive times this was generally the case; though it must be acknowledged that even a whole church may judge uncharitably and rashly, and in this case their censures certainly will not be ratified at the righteous tribunal of God.

Excommunications became much more dreadful, when, in the progress of superstition, the participation of religious rites, and especially that of the Lord's supper, came to be considered as a necessary qualification.

for the favour of God and the happiness of heaven, an opinion which prevailed in very early times.

Whatever was the *cause*, the *effect* of church censures in those times was very extraordinary. It was customary, as we have seen, for persons under sentence of excommunication to attend at the doors of the church with all the marks of the deepest dejection and contrition, intreating the ministers and people with tears in their eyes, and earnestly begging their prayers, and restoration to the peace of the church.

Persons the most distinguished for their wealth and power were indiscriminately subject to these church censures, and had no other method of being restored to communion, but by the same humiliation and contrition that was expected from the meanest person in the society. — When Philip the governor of Egypt, would have entered a christian church, after the commission of some crime, the bishop forbade him till he first made confession of his sin, and passed through the order of penitents, a sentence which, we are told, he willingly submitted to. Even the emperor Theodosius the Great, was excommunicated by Ambrose the bishop of Milan, for a barbarous slaughter of the Thessalonians; and that great prince submitted to a penance of eight months, and was not received into the church till after the most humble confession of his offence, and giving the most undeniable proof of his sincerity.

I must add, that whenever a person was excommunicated in any particular church, it was generally deemed wrong to admit him to communion in any other. Sometimes, however, neighbouring churches, being well acquainted with the cause of excommunication, and not approving of it, received into their communion the persons so stigmatized. And when the regular subordination of one church to another was established, it was customary for the excommunicated person to appeal from the sentence of his particular church to a higher tribunal. Many of these appeals were made to the church of Rome, from other churches not regularly subordinate to it, which laid the first foundation of the exorbitant power of that church.

When christians began to debate about *opinions*,

and to divide and subdivide themselves on that account, it is to be lamented, but not to be wondered at, that they laid an undue stress on what they deemed to be the *right faith*, and that they should apply church censures in order to prevent the spreading of heretical opinions; without waiting till they could judge by observation what effect such opinions had on the temper and general conduct of men, and indeed without considering that influence at all. The first remarkable abuse of the power of excommunication in this way is by no means such as recommends it, being such as would now be deemed the most frivolous and unjustifiable that can well be imagined. For on the account of nothing more than a difference of opinion and practice with respect to the time of celebrating Easter, Victor, bishop of Rome, excommunicated at once all the eastern churches. But this was reckoned a most daring piece of insolence and arrogance, for which he was severely reproved by other bishops; nor indeed, was any regard paid to the censure. It must be observed that, in consequence of appeals being made from inferior churches to the patriarchal ones, these took upon them to extend their excommunications beyond the limits of their acknowledged jurisdiction, viz. to all who held any obnoxious opinion or practice. Persons thus censured often formed separate churches, and in return excommunicated those who had excommunicated them.

In this state of mutual hostility things often continued a long time, till the influence of an emperor, or some other foreign circumstance determined the dispute in favour of one of them, which was thenceforth deemed the *orthodox* side of the question, whilst the other was condemned as *heretical*. It is well known that the Arians and Athanasians were in this manner reputed orthodox by turns; as both had the sanction of councils, and emperors in their favour; till, in consequence of mere faction, and the authority of the emperors, the party of Athanasius prevailed at last.

The first instance that we meet with of the use of actual *force*, or rather of desire to make use of it, by a christian church, was in the proceedings against Paul bishop of Samosata; when, at the request of a chris-

ian synod, the heathen emperor Aurelian, expelled him from the episcopal house *. Indeed, having been deposed from his office, if that had been done by competent authority, namely, that of his own diocese, he could not be said to have any right to the emoluments of it, and therefore his keeping possession of the episcopal house was an act of violence on his side.

But as soon as the empire became what is called christian, we have examples enough of the interference of civil power in matters of religion; and we soon find instances of the abuse of excommunication, and the addition of civil incapacities annexed to that of ecclesiastical censure. In a council held at Ptolemais in Cyrene, Andronicus the prefect was excommunicated, and it was expressed in the sentence, that no temple of God should be open unto him, that no one should salute him during his life, and that he should not be buried after his death †.

The emperor Constantine, besides banishing Arius himself, ordering his writings to be burnt, and forbidding any person to conceal him under pain of death, deprived many of those who were declared heretics of the privileges which he had granted to christians in general, and besides imposing fines upon them, forbade their assemblies, and demolished their places of worship. On the other hand, the emperor Constantius banished the orthodox bishops because they would not condemn Athanasius. Nestorius was banished by Theodosius, in whose reign persecution for the sake of religion made greater advances than in any other within this period. He certainly imagined he made a right use of the power with which God had entrusted him, by employing it in establishing what he thought to be the orthodox faith, without ever reflecting on the impropriety of such a *means* with respect to such an *end*.

Immediately upon his baptism, which, according to the superstitious notions which influenced many persons of that age, he had deferred till his life was in danger by sickness, he published a decree commanding

* Fleury's seventh Discourse, p. 7. † Sueton, A. D. 411.

that, "in order that all his subjects should make profession of the same religion which the divine apostle Peter taught the Romans, the doctrine of the Trinity should be embraced by those who would be called *catholics*; that all others," whom he says he judged to be *mad*, "should bear the infamous name of *heretics*, and that their assemblies should not be called *churches*, reserving their farther punishment in the first place to the vengeance of heaven, and afterwards to the movements with which God should inspire him*." In consequence, I suppose of one of these *movements*, three years after this edict, he published another, forbidding the Arians to hold their assemblies in cities. He however, was not the person who was inspired with the glorious thought of sentencing all the heretics to be burned alive. This was reserved for a more advanced state of the christian church.

It was of a son of Theodosius, viz. the eastern emperor Honorius, that the authority of persecution to death was obtained, by four bishops sent from Carthage for that purpose in 410; and the edict extended to all who differed ever so little from the catholic faith †. But it does not appear that this sanguinary decree was carried into execution.

Notwithstanding all the hardships which the christians had lately suffered from the pagans, and the just remonstrances they had made on the subject, no sooner were they in possession of the same power, than they were too ready to make a similar use of it; and instead of shewing the world the contrast of a truly christian spirit, they were eager to retaliate upon their enemies, whom they now had at their mercy. But at first the number of the pagans was too great to make very violent proceedings at all prudent. As the christians increased in number the pagans were soon laid under great restrictions.

In the year 346, it was decreed that all the heathen temples in cities should be shut up, but that those in the villages should not be meddled with; the christians having increased more in the cities, and super-

* Suetonius, A. D. 378. † Taylor on the Grand Apostacy, p. 131.

stition, as might be expected, retaining its hold on the minds of men much longer in the villages, where they had less intercourse with strangers, and consequently less opportunity of receiving information. It was in this state of things that the heathens began to be distinguished by the name of *Pagans* (*Pagani*) that is, inhabitants of villages. In the year 382, these pagans were laid under farther restrictions: for though they were allowed to frequent their temples as usual, they were not suffered to make any sacrifices there. At the same time, however, the clandestine assemblies of the Manicheans were absolutely forbidden.

Even the more learned christians, who might have been expected, by reflections upon the past, to have seen things in a juster light, and to have entertained more liberal sentiments, soon became the advocates for the interference of civil power in matters of religion. Austin, the oracle of the church in his own time, and still more so after his death, confessed that he had formerly been of opinion that heretics should not be harassed by catholics, but rather allured by all kinds of gentle methods; yet afterwards he changed his opinion, having learned by experience, that the laws made by the emperors against heretics had proved the happy occasion of their conversion*. His whole *Epistle to Vincentius*, where we learn this, is well worth reading, as being perhaps the first piece in which the use of force in matters of religion is pleaded for. He certainly meant well by it.

As one great source of information is by means of books, all those whose wish it has been to prevent the spreading of any particular opinion, have generally done every thing in their power to suppress the books that recommend it. The heathens made frequent attempts to compel the christians to give up their sacred books; but the first example of any thing of this kind by christians (except what is mentioned above concerning the writings of Arius) was exhibited by Theodosius, who in 448 made a law, by which it was ordered, that all the books, the doctrine of which was not conform-

* *Opera*, vol. ii. p. 174.

able to the councils of Nice and Ephesus, and also to the decisions of Cyril, should be destroyed, and the concealers of them put to death. Afterwards pope Gelasius, in a council held at Rome in 494, specified the books which the church of Rome rejected, but without laying any penalty on those who should read them*.

So far those who were in possession of power, and who were instigated by bigotry, went in these early times. We shall see a much greater extension of this, as well as every other method of preventing and extirpating heresy, in the following period.

SECTION IV.

Of the Methods of enforcing ecclesiastical Censures from the Time of Austin to the Reformation and afterwards by the Catholics.

WE are now launching into what has been properly enough called the *dark age* of this western part of the world; and we shall not be surprized to find *bigotry* and *violence* keep pace with *ignorance*, and that they should not be lessened but by the increase of knowledge and but very slowly even then.

As, upon the conversion of the barbarous nations to christianity, the bishops became some of the most considerable land owners, in consequence of which they had a right to sit in their parliaments, to hold courts, and even to serve in the wars, there necessarily arose an unnatural mixture of civil and ecclesiastical power, the same person serving in both capacities. Since all public concerns, of a spiritual as well as a temporal nature, were frequently discussed in these parliaments, or assemblies of the states, regulations of all kinds, ecclesiastical as well as others, were enforced by civil penalties.

* Fleury's seventh Discourse, p. 24.

By this means *compulsory penances* were introduced in the seventh century, when we find proofs of their being in Spain. There the bishops, finding offenders refusing to submit to penance, complained to their parliament, and requested their princes to interpose their temporal power. The punishments that were enjoined in this manner, were prohibitions to eat flesh, to wear linen, to mount a horse, &c *. It would have been happy if civil power had proceeded no farther than this in matters of religion, and had extended to no other cases.

In this period the sentence of excommunication became a much more dreadful thing than it had been before, and a proportionably greater solemnity was added to the forms of it. The most solemn part of the new ceremonial was the extinction of lamps or candles, by throwing them on the ground, with a solemn imprecation, that the person against whom the excommunication was pronounced, might in like manner, be extinguished, or destroyed by the judgment of God. And because the people were summoned to attend this ceremony by the sound of a bell, and the curses accompanying the excommunication were recited out of a book, while the person who pronounced them stood on some balcony or stage, from which he could throw down his lights, we have the phrase of *cursing by bell, book, and candle*. The first example of excommunication by throwing down lighted lamps was at Rheims, about the year 900, when the bishops excommunicated some murderers in this manner †.

When heresies sprung up in the church, and there were many other offenders who were out of the reach of church power, it came to be the custom to pronounce these curses against them on certain days of the year, and we find Thursday before Easter made choice of for this purpose. Thus we read that John XXII. according to the custom of the church of Rome, on the Thursday before Easter, published a bull, by which he excommunicated the poor of Lyons (or the Albigenses) the Arnoldists, and all heretics in general,

* Fleury, vol. xiii. p. 44. † Jortin's Remarks, vol. iv. p. 512.

the Corsairs, the falsifiers of apostolical bulls, and all who usurped the city of Rome, or the patrimony of St. Peter *.

At length sentences of general excommunication becoming frequent (every decretal, though the subject of it was ever so trifling, denouncing this sentence against all who should disobey it) and consequently whole classes of men, and sometimes whole communities, falling under those censures, they came to be despised and lost their effect †.

Leonardo Aretino, who wrote before the reformation, observes, in his history of Florence, book iv. p. 77, that when the citizens had been used to the papal censures, they did not much regard the interdicts they were laid under; especially as they observed that they were not decreed for any good reason, but depended on the will of those who had most influence with the popes. And in the year 1377, when the city was laid under an interdict, public orders were given to the clergy to pay no respect to it ‡.

When the passions of ecclesiastics were much interested, they were not content with mere church censures; but, having the sanction of the civil power, they annexed the most dreadful civil penalties to their excommunications. These were easily introduced after the Roman empire became christian, and in many of the imperial constitutions made after that event, we find various civil disqualifications, some of which were mentioned in the former period, added to the censures of the church. But the whole system of this mixed ecclesiastical and civil polity received fresh and stronger sanctions upon the conversion of the Germans, Goths, Celts, and other northern nations. These people had been used to excommunication in their own pagan religions; and the consequence of it had always been the most dreadful civil penalties and disabilities. Among the Gauls, excommunicated persons had been looked upon as wicked and scandalous wretches; all people avoided their company, they were not allowed

* Hist. des Papes, vol. iv. p. 12. † Fleury's tenth Discourse, p. 65.
‡ P. 172.

the benefits of the courts of justice, nor were they admitted to any post of honour or profit in the community.

Of this prejudice of the people the christian priests willingly took advantage, as by this means they could overawe those who despised mere church censures. Civil penalties for offences against the church were increased by degrees, till heresy came to be considered as a crime of so heinous a nature, that *burning alive* was decreed to be, of all others, the most proper punishment of it. We do not indeed, wonder to find that, of all crimes, the church, which had so much at stake, should be most alarmed at that of *heresy*, and therefore should apply what might be thought to be the most effectual remedy and the most likely to terrify those who should be exposed to it.

It is, however, curious enough to observe that, as there could be no pretence for ecclesiastics, *as such*, having recourse to civil penalties, or according to the usual phrase, making use of the *temporal sword*; whenever it was thought necessary that any criminals against the church should be punished with death, they were solemnly delivered over to the civil power. In the council of Lateran in 1179, which was before any heretics were punished with death, it is said that, “though the church rejects bloody executions, it may nevertheless be aided by the laws of the christian princes, and that the fear of corporeal punishments often makes persons have recourse to spiritual remedies *.” And to this day the court of Inquisition not only solemnly delivers over to the civil power all those who are destined to suffer death, but even formally recommends them to mercy, where it is certainly not the wish of those who express this concern for them, that they should find any.

Among other methods of trying whether a person was a heretic, we find, in these dark ages, one of the ordeals of the northern nations, and the same that till of late years, was thought to be the proper test of witch-craft in this country. For in the persecution of

* Histoire des Papes, vol. iii. p. 90.

the Albigenſes, in order to know whether a perſon was a heretic, thoſe who ſuſpected him threw him into water, on the ſuppoſition that, if he was a heretic, the devil within him being lighter than the water, would prevent his ſinking*. But as I have obſerved before, the puniſhment that was thought to be the moſt proper for hereſy, was burning alive; and indeed this was the firſt capital puniſhment that was decreed for it. There was not, however, any proper capital puniſhment for hereſy, till the year 1215, when it was appointed by the fourth council of Lateran, that all heretics ſhould be delivered over to the civil magiſtrate to be burned.

This peculiarly dreadful puniſhment, ſeems to have been thought the moſt proper for hereſy, from the interpretation that was given of John xv. 6. as may be inferred from a bull of John XXIII. quoted by L'Enfant in his *History of the Council of Piſa*, vol. ii. p. 98. in which he ſays, “We ordain that they be publicly burned, in execution of the ſentence of our Saviour, John xv. 6. *If any man abide not in me, he is caſt forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and caſt them forth into the fire, and they are burned.*” The church of Rome, having once employed this horrid engine, found it ſo well adapted to the reſt of her ſyſtem, and ſo neceſſary to enforce a regard to decrees not recommended by reaſon or argument, that ſhe had frequent recourſe to it; and though this was the greateſt of all abuſes of eccleſiaſtical authority, it was retained along with other corruptions of chriſtianity, by moſt of the firſt reformers.

The burning of heretics was not, however, the firſt kind of perſecution which the church of Rome employed to ſubdue her enemies; and recourſe was not had to this, till other methods, and even ſeveral of a very violent kind, had been tried without effect. The firſt object that roused the ſanguinary diſpoſition of the court of Rome, was the hereſies as they were called, of the Waldenſes, and of the Albigenſes, the former of whom inhabited ſome of the mountainous parts of the Alps, and the latter the ſouthern provinces of France.

* Baſnage *Histoire des Eglises Reformées*, vol. i. p. 229.

These people were dreadfully persecuted by Innocent III. who first prohibited all manner of intercourse or communication with them, confiscated their goods, disinherited their children, destroyed their houses, denied them the rite of sepulchre, and gave their accusers one third of their effects. But in 1198, he erected the court of *Inquisition*, the object of which was the utter extirpation of them, in which Dominic was the chief actor. Afterwards he published Crusades against them, promising all who would engage in that war, the same indulgences that had been granted to those who engaged in the expeditions for the recovery of the Holy Land. In consequence of this, great multitudes of them were destroyed with all manner of cruelties.

This war, or rather massacre, continued near forty years, and a million of men are supposed to have lost their lives in it. And of these, it is said, there were three hundred thousand of the Crusaders themselves *. However, the consequence of this persecution was the same with that of most others; the reprobated opinion being farther disseminated by this means. Particularly, the kings of England, and the earls of Thoulouse (who had been the heads of the Albigenes) being related, many of them came over into England, where great numbers embraced their opinions. They were afterwards imbibed by Wickliffe, and from him they passed into Bohemia.

Perhaps the most horrible and perfidious of any single act of barbarity, committed by the papists, was the massacre of the protestants in Paris, on the eve of St. Bartholomew, in 1572; when the Hugonots (as the protestants in France are called) were lulled asleep by all the forms of pacification, and an attempt was made to rise upon them, and destroy them all in one night. In Paris, and some other towns, it took effect, and great numbers were massacred when they were altogether unapprehensive of danger. Had this happened in a popular tumult, it would have been more excusable; but it was not only a most deliberate act of perfidy, concerted long before the time of exe-

* *Histoire des Papes*, vol. iii. p. 16.

cution, but the king himself, Charles IX. bore a part in it, firing upon his own subjects from his window; and pope Gregory XIII. gave solemn thanks to God for this massacre in the church of St. Louis, whither he himself went in procession. The guns of St. Angelo were also fired, and bonfires were made in the streets of Rome upon the occasion*.

The court of Rome has even employed the same bloody methods to extirpate heresies that arose among the catholics themselves, those who maintained them adhering to the popish system in general. This was the case with respect to some Franciscans in the fourteenth century, who maintained, that neither Christ, nor the apostles, had any personal property. This most innocent opinion was most vehemently opposed by the Dominicans; and John XXII. in 1324, pronounced it to be a pestilential, erroneous, damnable, and blasphemous doctrine, subversive of the catholic faith; and he declared all those who adhered to it obstinate heretics, and rebels against the church. In consequence of this merciless decree, great numbers of those poor Franciscans were apprehended by the Dominican inquisitors, and committed to the flames†.

It would be unjust, however, to suppose that all the members of the *catholic church*, as it is called, have been equally bent on the extirpation of heretics by these violent methods. At all times there have been advocates for moderation among very zealous papists. Thomas Aquinas, who for many centuries was esteemed the bulwark of the popish cause, maintained that religion ought not to be extended by force; alleging that no person can believe as he would, and that the will should not be forced‡. There were also those who remonstrated very strongly against all the persecutions of the protestants by the papists, especially those of Philip II. of Spain, as well as those of Louis XIV. of France. And there is reason to believe that the minds of the catholics in general are now so much enlightened, partly by reflection, but chiefly by experience, that

* *Histoire des Papes*, vol. v. p. 28. † Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 178.
‡ Fleury's sixth Discourse, p. 32.

they would no more act the same things over again, than the protestants would, who, as will be seen in the next section, were guilty of almost as great excesses in proportion to the extent of their power.

As we are naturally more interested in our own history, I shall mention a few more particulars concerning the progress of persecution in this country. There were no penal statutes against heresy, enacted by the authority of an English parliament, before the fifth year of Richard II. in 1382; when it was appointed, that heretics should be kept in prison "till they justified themselves according to law, and the reason of the holy church." The commitment was to be the rule for the chancellor, after the bishop had presented the name of the offender.

Afterwards Henry IV. in order to gain the good will of the clergy, procured an act, in the second year of his reign, 1400, by which convicted heretics might be imprisoned and confined at the discretion of the diocesan, or of his commissary, and those who refused to abjure, or who relapsed, were to be burnt to death in some conspicuous place before the people. By this law all heretics were left to the mercy of the bishops in the spiritual courts, who might imprison them or put them to death, without presentment or trial by a jury, as was the practice in all other criminal cases.

The reign of his son Henry V. whose interest it was to keep things quiet at home, by obliging the clergy, while he was carrying on his wars abroad, was very unfavourable to free inquiry. In the beginning of his reign 1414, an act was made against the Lollards or Wickliffites, by which it was decreed that they should forfeit all their lands and goods to the king. In this reign, however, it was that the writ *de hæretico comburendo* was issued from the chancery; by which it seems that the heretics were taken again into the king's protection. But this does not appear to have been necessary, or at least to have been practised, for no such writs are to be found upon the rolls before the reign of Henry VIII. By virtue of these statutes, the clergy exercised numberless cruelties upon the people,

there being hundreds of examples of persons imprisoned, and probably put to death by them *.

The prohibition of books was an evil that was greatly increased after the reformation, though it began before. There were rigorous edicts against the writings of Wickliffe and John Hufs. But Leo X. renewed them in condemning the propositions of Luther, and all the books that bore his name. He made a decree that no book should be published in Rome, or in any other city or diocese, before it had been approved by an officer appointed for that purpose; and he was the first who made any decree of this nature †. The popes that succeeded him, forbade under pain of excommunication, the reading of all the books of heretics; and in order to distinguish them, Philip II. ordered the Spanish inquisition to print a catalogue of them, which Paul IV. also did at Rome; at the same time ordering them to be burnt ‡. In 1597, Clement VIII. published another catalogue of books prohibited, and among them was Junius's translation of the Old Testament, and Beza's of the New, though the former might, at the discretion of the bishop, be granted to learned men.

SECTION V.

Of Persecution by Protestants.

I HAVE already observed, that this sanguinary method of propagating and establishing religion was adopted, together with other popish maxims by the reformers; and alas, the history of all reformed countries bears too strong evidence of it.

In the wars of Bohemia, both the protestants and papists agreed that it was lawful to extirpate with fire

* Neale's History of the Puritans, vol. i. p. 5.

† Histoire des Papes, vol. iv. p. 389.

‡ Basnage, vol. iii. p. 455. Histoire des Papes, vol. iv. p. 634.

and sword, all enemies of the *true religion*. The protestants acknowledged that *heretics* were worthy of capital punishment, but they denied that John Huss was a heretic. Ziska, the general of the Hussites, fell upon the sect of the Beghards in 1421, and put some of them to the sword, and condemned the rest to the flames, a punishment which they bore with the most cheerful fortitude. *

Luther had no idea of the impropriety of civil penalties to enforce the true religion. He only objected to the putting heretics to death, but approved of their being confined, as madmen. He persuaded the elector of Saxony not to tolerate the followers of Zuinglius, merely because he did not believe the real presence of Christ in the eucharist; and the Lutheran lawyers condemned to death Peter Postellus for being a Zuinglian. They also put to death several anabaptists †. It was not till towards the end of the seventeenth century that the Lutherans adopted the leading maxim which, Mosheim says, had been peculiar to the Arminians, that no good subject was justly punishable by the magistrates for his religious opinions ‡.

Mosheim also says, that Zuinglius is said to have attributed to the civil magistrate such an extensive power in ecclesiastical affairs, as is inconsistent with the essence and genius of religion §. He condemned an anabaptist to be drowned, with this cruel insult, *Qui iterum merget mergatur; He that dips a second time, let him be dipped* ||.

Calvin went upon the same plan, persecuting many worthy persons, and even procuring Servetus to be burned alive for writing against the doctrine of the Trinity. He also wrote a treatise in order to prove the lawfulness of putting heretics to death; and in one of his letters he says, “ Since the papists, in order
“ to vindicate their own superstitions, cruelly shed
“ innocent blood, it is a shame that a christian magis-
“ trate should have no courage at all in the defence of

* Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 261. 274. † Chandler's History of Persecution, p. 311. ‡ Vol. iv. p. 440. § Ib. iii. p. 320.
|| Chandler's History of Persecution, p. 328.

“certain truth.” Even Melancthon, though esteemed to be of a mild and moderate temper, approved of the death of Servetus *.

After the reformation in England, the laws against heretics were not relaxed, but the proceedings were appointed to be regular, as in other criminal cases. Thus it was enacted in 1534, that heretics should be proceeded against upon presentment by a jury, or on the oath of two witnesses at least †.

When the new liturgy was confirmed by act of parliament in the reign of Edward VI. in 1548, it was ordered that such of the clergy as refused to conform to it, should, upon the first conviction, suffer six months imprisonment, and forfeit a year's income of their benefices; for the second offence they should forfeit all their church preferments, and suffer a year's imprisonment; and for the third offence imprisonment for life. They who should write or print any thing against the book were fined ten pounds for the first offence, twenty for the second, with forfeiture of all their goods; and imprisonment for life for the third ‡.

Cranmer, whilst he was a Lutheran, consented to the burning of John Lambert and Ann Askew, for those very doctrines for which he himself suffered afterwards; and when he was a sacramentarian he was the cause of the death of John Bocher, an Arian, importuning the young king Edward VI. to sign the death warrant; and he is said to have done it with great reluctance, saying, with tears in his eyes, that if he did wrong, it was in submission to his authority (Cranmer's) and that he should answer to God for it.

Many were the severities under which the Puritans laboured in the reign of queen Elizabeth, and the princes of the Stuart family; and the Presbyterians were but too ready to act with a high hand in their turn, in the short time that they were in power; but they were soon repaid with interest on the restoration. At the revolution they obtained pretty good terms, but still all those who could not subscribe the doctrinal articles of the church of England, remained subject to

* Chandler's Hist. p. 321. 323. † Neale's Hist. p. 10. ‡ Ib. p. 39.

the same penalties as before, and a new and severe law was made against the Antitrinitarians. This law, which subjects the offender to confiscation of goods and imprisonment for life, if he persists in acting contrary to the law, still remains in force, though many other hardships under which Dissenters formerly laboured have lately been removed.

The persecution of the Remonstrants by the Calvinistic party in Holland was as rancorous in the mode of carrying it on, as any of the popish persecutions, though the penalties did not extend beyond banishment.

All the protestant churches have been too ready to impose their own faith upon others, and to bind all their posterity to believe as they did. But the most remarkable public act of this kind occurs in the history of the protestant church in France. At a synod held in 1612, it was decreed, that they who take holy orders should take this oath. "I whose name is here under written, do receive and approve the confession of faith of the reformed churches in this kingdom, and also promise to persevere in it until death, and to believe and teach agreeably thereunto *." In another decree, passed in 1620, they adopt the decrees of the synod of Dort, promising to persevere in that faith all their lives, and to defend it to the utmost of their power †. Is it to be regretted that a church, the principles of which were so narrow and intolerant, should, in the course of divine providence, be suppressed? It is to be hoped that when it shall seem fit to the same wise providence to revive the protestant interest in that country, it will be more liberal, and more deserving of the name of a *reformed christian* church.

There is too great a mixture of civil penalties in the ordinary discipline of the church of England to this day. According to her canons, every person who maintains any thing contrary to the doctrine or rites of the church, or the authority by which they are enforced, is declared to be *ipso facto* excommunicated. Many other offences, which are properly civil, are

* Quick's Synodicon, vol. i. p. 348. † Ib. vol. ii. p. 38.

deemed to be of a spiritual nature, and are punished by excommunication; which is two-fold, the greater and the less. The latter only excludes a man from the sacrament, and communion in the divine offices; but the greater excommunication cuts a man off from all commerce with christians in temporal affairs; so that, if the orders of the church were universally and strictly observed, the poor wretch must necessarily perish; since no person in the nation might sell him food, raiment, or any convenience whatever.

SECTION VI.

The History of Mistakes concerning moral Virtue.

NOT only did the christian church adopt very wrong and pernicious maxims of church discipline, but christians have also adopted very false and hurtful notions concerning *moral virtue* itself, which is the end of all discipline; and it may be useful to take a general view of these corruptions, as well as of others.

According to the genuine doctrine of reason and revelation, nothing is of any avail to recommend a man to the favour of God, and to insure his future happiness, besides good dispositions of mind, and a habit and conduct of life agreeable to them. This is the religion of nature, and likewise that of the Old and New Testaments. But the religion of the heathen world, and that of many of the Jews, in the time of our Saviour, was of a quite different stamp. The heathens, having none but low notions of their Gods, had no idea of recommending themselves to their favour, but by the punctual observance of certain rites, ceremonies, and modes of worship, which at best had no relation to moral virtue, and often consisted in the most horrid and shameful violation of the plainest natural duties.

The pharisaical Jews, also, overlooking the excellent nature of the moral precepts of their Law, and

the perfect character of the great Being whom they were taught to worship, and directed to resemble, attached themselves wholly to ritual observances. Upon these, and on their relation to their ancestor Abraham, they chiefly depended for insuring to themselves the favour of God, to the utter exclusion of all the gentile world, whatever might be their characters in a moral respect.

Our Lord and his apostles took every opportunity of opposing this fundamental corruption of genuine religion, and recalled mens attention to their hearts and lives. And one would have thought that, by the abolition of all the peculiar rites of the Jewish law, and appointing none in their place (besides baptism and the Lord's supper, which are exceedingly simple, and have obvious moral uses) an effectual bar would have been put in the way of the old superstitions. But human nature being the same, and men's dislike to moral virtue operating as before, and making them ready to adopt superstitious observances as a compensation for it, *pretences* and *modes* were not long wanting; and at length proper moral virtue was as effectually excluded in the christian religion, as ever it had been in corrupt Judaism, or heathenism itself; and as great stress was laid upon things that bore no relation to moral virtue, but were in fact, inconsistent with it, and subversive of it, as had ever been done by the most superstitious and misinformed of mankind.

Did not both the most authentic history, and even the present state of religion in the church of Rome, furnish sufficient vouchers of this, it would not, in the present enlightened age, be even credible, that such practices as I shall be obliged to mention, could ever have been used by christians, as methods of recommending themselves to God.

We find that in early times an undue stress was laid upon the ordinances of *baptism* and the *Lord's supper*, as if these rites themselves, when duly administered (to which their being administered by a person regularly ordained for the purpose was considered as necessary) imparted some *spiritual grace*. Thus baptism was supposed to wash away all past sins; and the act of com-

munion to impart some other secret virtue, by which a title to the blessings of the gospel was secured to the communicant. On this account, many persons who professed themselves to be christians, deferred baptism till late in life, or even to the hour of death, that they might leave the world with the greater certainty of all their sins being forgiven, and before any new guilt could be contracted.

Those of the early Fathers who ascribed the least to the rite of baptism, supposed that by it was done away whatever inconvenience mankind had been subjected to in consequence of the fall of Adam; so that they made a great difference between the case of those children who died baptized, and those who died unbaptized; and the virtue that was ascribed to the Lord's supper was the foundation of all the superstitions respecting that ordinance, of which an account has already been given.

When moral virtue had been once ascribed to any corporeal action, instituted by divine appointment, christians were led by degrees to imagine that a similar virtue might be communicated by other actions, or signs, not of divine appointment, but bearing some relation to religion. This superstitious use was first made of the *sign of the cross*, which, as has been observed, was used originally with great innocence, perhaps as a private mark of distinction between the christians and heathens, in the time of persecution; or, in peaceable times, to shew the heathens that they were not ashamed of that very circumstance with which they reproached them the most, viz. the crucifixion of their master.

We first hear of this ceremony among the Montanists; and Tertullian, who became a Montanist, makes great boast of it. In the beginning of any business, says he, going out, coming in, dressing, washing, eating, lighting candles, going to bed, sitting down, or whatever we do, we sign our forehead with the sign of the cross*.

In the third century we find the sign of the cross in

* De Corona, cap. iv. Opera, p. 192.

still more general use, it being thought to be a defence against enchantments and evil spirits; and no christian undertook any thing of moment without it. The use of this sign was brought more into fashion by the emperor Constantine, who it is said, made use of it as his imperial banner or standard. And so high did this sign of the cross rise in estimation, in later ages, that the papists maintain that the cross, and even the sign of the cross, is to be adored with the worship which they call *Latria*, or that of the highest kind*.

After the sign of the cross, a sanctifying virtue was ascribed to *holy water*, or salt and water, such as the heathens had used in their purifications, consecrated by a bishop. An extraordinary power was also ascribed to lights burning in the day-time, to the use of incense, to the relics of the saints, and to their images; and as the superstitious veneration for the real eucharist, produced a *mock* one, so it probably occasioned another superstition, something similar to it, viz. the making of little waxen images of a lamb, which were either invented or much improved by pope Urban VI. The pope alone has the power of consecrating them, and that in first year only of his popedom, and in every seventh year afterwards. In the service on this occasion, which may be seen in the *History of Popery*, vol. iii. p. 531, these *Agnus Dei's* as they are called, are said to be *blessed* and *sanctified*, so as “by honouring and worshipping them, we thy servants may have our crimes washed off, the spots of our sins wiped away, pardons may be procured, graces bestowed, that at the last, with thy saints and elect, we may merit to receive eternal life.”

Still greater virtue was ascribed to pilgrimages to visit particular churches and places, which were reputed holy, on account of their having been the resort of holy persons, or the theatre of holy actions, &c. and a similar virtue has been ascribed to the attendance on particular ceremonies. In 1071, the pope promised indulgence for all sin confessed by those who should

* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 202. 205. 238.

assist at the dedication of a church at mount Cassin, or who should come to the new church during the octave; which, Fleury says, brought an astonishing concourse of people, so that not only the monastery, and the town, but even the neighbouring country was filled with them. Sixtus IV. in 1476, granted indulgences, by an express and particular act, to those who should devoutly celebrate an annual festival in honour of the immaculate conception of the virgin Mary *. This superstitious use of pilgrimages was likewise the foundation of all the *Jubilees* which have been celebrated at Rome, of which an account has been given among the *festivals* that have been introduced into the christian church.

All the popish sacraments are likewise certain ceremonies, to the use of which the members of the catholic church ascribe a supernatural and sanctifying effect upon the mind; and they suppose them to have that weight and influence with the divine being, which nothing but real virtue, or good dispositions of mind, can ever have.

If things quite foreign to virtue have nevertheless been put in the place of it, we shall not wonder that actions of real value in themselves, and which, when proceeding from a right disposition of mind, are real virtues, should have been much magnified, and that the actions themselves should have been imagined to be meritorious, even independently of the proper state of mind.

Thus, since giving to the needy, or being liberal for any useful purpose, is generally a test of virtue, it is no wonder that, in all ages, it has, by many persons, been substituted in the place of it. And notwithstanding the strong cautions on this head in the New Testament, especially the apostle Paul's saying that he might *give all his goods to feed the poor*, and yet be destitute of *charity*, or brotherly love, this spurious kind of virtue was never made more account of, than in the corrupt ages of the christian church; when an open traffic, as it were, was kept up between earth

* Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 271.

and heaven ; there being nothing of a spiritual nature that they did not imagine might be bought with money.

In the eighth century, Mosheim says *, a notion prevailed, that future punishment might be prevented by donations to religious uses ; and therefore few wills were made in which something was not bequeathed to the church. For, of all pious uses, in the disposal of wealth, the *church* (which as it was then always understood, meant the *clergy* or the *monks*) was universally deemed a better object than the poor. Hence that amazing accumulation of wealth, which nearly threatened the utter extinction of all merely civil property.

Obvious as we now think the nature of virtue to be, and fully satisfied as we are, that the nature and excellency of it consists in its tendency to make men happy, in the possession of their own minds, and in all their relations ; so grossly has its nature been mistaken, that not only have things intirely foreign to it been substituted in its place, as those above-mentioned, but even things that have no other effect than to give pain, and make men miserable. This most absurd and spurious kind of virtue began very early in the christian church ; and in process of time the austerities to which christians voluntarily subjected themselves, in order to make their peace with God and secure their future happiness, almost exceed belief.

It has been observed before, that the first corruptions of christianity were derived from heathenism, and especially from the principles of the Oriental philosophy ; and there are similar austerities at this very day among the Hindoos. Their notion that the soul is a distinct substance from the body, and that the latter is only a prison and clog to the former, naturally leads them to extenuate and mortify the body, in order to exalt and purify the soul. Hence came the idea of the great use and value of fasting, of abstinence from marriage, and of voluntary pain and torture ; till at length it became a maxim, that the man who could contrive to make himself the most miserable here, se-

* Vol. ii. p. 60.

cures to himself the greatest share of happiness hereafter. As the principle which led to all this system came from the East, we are not surprized to find the first traces of it in those sects of christian heretics who borrowed their leading sentiments more immediately from the principles of the Oriental philosophy.

The Gnostics, considering matter and material bodies as the source of all evil, were no friends to marriage, because it was a means of multiplying corporeal beings; and upon the same principle they also objected to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and its future re-union with the immortal spirit *. Marcion also, adopting the principles of the Oriental philosophy, prohibited marriage, the use of wine, and flesh meats, and all external comforts of life, in order to mortify the body, and call off the mind from the allurements of sense. Of the same nature was the doctrine of Bardesanes, Tatian, and many others †.

Some of the heathen philosophers in the western world had been used, from the same principle, to exercise strange severities upon themselves and their disciples, from the days of Pythagoras, to those of Lucian, who introduces the philosopher Nigrinus as condemning such practices, and observing that they had occasioned the death of several persons ‡. The Greek philosophers had also a particular dress, and many of them affected to appear rough, mean, and dirty. The christian monks imitated these old philosophers in their garb and appearance; and they were often censured for the same pride and contentious spirit §.

To vindicate the doctrine of corporeal austerity, it was pretended, in the second century, that Christ established a double rule of christianity and virtue, the one more sublime than the other, for those who wished to attain to greater perfection. These thought that it was incumbent on them to extenuate and humble the body, by fasting, watching, and labour, and to refrain from wine, flesh meat, matrimony, and commerce ||.

Great stress was also laid, both by the eastern and

* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 109. † Ib. p. 178. 180.

‡ Jortin's Remarks, vol. iii. p. 23. § Ib. p. 29.

|| Mosheim, vol. i. p. 157.

western philosophers, on *contemplation*, to which *solitude* was favourable. By thus excluding themselves from the world, and meditating intensely on sublime subjects, they thought they could raise the soul above all external objects, and advance its preparation for a better and more spiritual state hereafter. Many christians, therefore, and especially those who had been addicted to the Platonic philosophy, before their conversion, were exceedingly fond of these exercises. And this notion, though more liberal than the former, which led them to torment and mortify the body, naturally led them to be very inattentive to it, seeking the cultivation of the *mind*, and the knowledge of truth, in a fancied abstraction from all sensible objects. In this state of contemplation, joined to solitude and abstinence, it is no wonder that they were open to many illusions; fancying themselves to be inspired in the same manner as the heathen prophets and prophetesses had fancied themselves to be, and as madmen are still generally imagined to be in the East. These pretensions to inspiration were most common among the Montanists, who were also most remarkable for their austerities.

In the third century, in which the doctrine of Plato prevailed much, we find that marriage, though permitted to all priests, as well as other persons, was thought to be unfit for those who aspired after great degrees of sanctity and purity; it being supposed to subject them to the power of evil dæmons, and on this account many people wished to have their clergy unmarried*. Origen, who was much addicted to Platonism, gave into the mystic theology, and recommended the peculiar practices of the heathen mystics, founded on the notion that silence, tranquillity, and solitude, accompanied with acts of mortification, which exhaust the body, were the means of exalting the soul.

The perversions of the sense of scripture by which these unnatural practices were supported are astonishing. Jerom, writing against marriage, call those who are in that state *vessels of dishonour*; and to them he

* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 218.

applies the saying of Paul, *They that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

The laws also of christian emperors soon began to favour these maxims. Constantine revoked all the laws that made celibacy infamous among the ancient Romans, and made it to be considered as honourable *.

I must now proceed to mention various other austerities, which poor deluded mortals, whom I am ashamed to call christians, inflicted upon themselves, vainly imagining to merit heaven by them, for themselves and others. In this I shall, in general, observe the order of time in which I find an account of them in ecclesiastical history; observing that the facts I mention are but a small specimen of the kind, but they may serve to give us an idea of the general sentiments and spirit that prevailed in the dark ages of the church.

Some of the Mystics of the fifth century not only lived among the wild beasts, but also after their manner. They ran naked through the desert with a furious aspect. They fed on grass and wild herbs, avoided the sight and conversation of men, remained motionless in certain places for several years, exposed to the rigour and inclemency of the seasons; and towards the conclusion of their lives, shut themselves up in narrow and miserable huts. All this was considered as true piety, the only method of rendering the Deity propitious to them; and by this means they attracted the highest veneration of the deluded multitude. One Simeon, a Syrian, in order perhaps to climb as near to heaven as he could, passed thirty-seven years of his wretched life upon five pillars, of six, twelve, thirty-two, thirty-six, and lastly forty cubits high. Others followed his example, being called *Stilites* by the Greeks, and *Sancticolumnares*, or *Pillar Saints*, by the Latins; and, of all the instances of superstitious frenzy, none were held in higher veneration than this, and the practice continued in the East till the twelfth century †.

Among the popish pilgrims there is a species called *Palmers*, from a bough of palm which they carry with them. These have no home, or place of residence,

* Sucur, A. D. 320.

† Mosheim, vol. i. p. 391.

but travel and beg their bread till they obtain what they call the *palm*, or a complete victory over their sins by death*.

Many of the rules to which the monastic orders are subject are extremely rigorous. Stephen a nobleman of Auvergne, who instituted the order of *Grand-montain*, with the permission of Gregory VII. forbid his monks the use of flesh meat even in sickness, and imposed upon them the observance of a solemn and uninterrupted silence†.

The hermits of Luceola in Umbria were not allowed any thing of fat in the preparation of their vegetables. They ate only raw herbs, except on Sundays and Thursdays. On other days they eat nothing but bread and water, and were continually employed in prayer or labour. They kept a strict silence all the week, and on Sundays only spake to one another between vespers and complines; and in their cells they had no covering for their feet or legs.

The persons the most distinguished in ecclesiastical history for their bodily austerities and religious exercises, were Dominic, who was one of these hermits, and Peter Damiani who was his spiritual guide, both of whom were mentioned above. This Dominic for many years had next to his skin an iron coat of mail, which he never put off but for the sake of flagellation. He seldom passed a day without chanting two psalters, at the same time whipping himself with both his hands; and yet this was his time of greatest relaxation. For in Lent, and while he was performing penance for other persons, he would repeat at least three psalters a day, whipping himself at the same time. He would often repeat two psalters without any interval between them, without even sitting down, or ceasing for one moment to whip himself.

Peter Damiani asking him one day if he could kneel with his coat of mail; he said, When I am well I make a hundred genuflections every fifteenth psalm, which is a thousand in the whole psalter; and one time he told his master that he had gone through the psalter

* History of Popery, vol. i. p. 212. † Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 308.
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eight times in one day and night; and at another time, trying his utmost, he repeated it twelve times, and as far as the psalm which begins with *Beati Quorum* of the thirteenth. And in repeating the psalter he did not stop at the hundred and fifty psalms, but added to them the canticles, the hymns, the creed of St. Athanasius, and the litanies, which are to be found at the end of the old psalters. His fasting and his coat of mail made his skin as black as a negroe, and besides this he wore four iron rings, two on his thighs, and two on his legs, to which he afterwards added four others; and besides this iron shirt he had another under him to sleep upon. Notwithstanding these severities, he died very old on the fourteenth of October, 1062, which day is dedicated to his honour in the calendar of the church of Rome*. The austerities of Peter Damiani were similar to these, and an account of them may be seen in the same historian†.

In the thirteenth century there arose in Italy, a sect that was called the *Flagellants*, or whippers, and it was propagated from thence over all the countries of Europe. They ran about in promiscuous multitudes, of both sexes, of all ranks and ages, both in public places, and in deserts, with whips in their hands, lashing their naked bodies with the greatest severity, shrieking dreadfully, and looking up to heaven with an air of horror and distraction; and this they did to obtain the divine mercy for themselves and others. For they maintained that this whipping was of equal virtue with baptism, and the other sacraments, and that the forgiveness of all sin was to be obtained by it from God, even without the merits of Jesus Christ. These people attracted the esteem and veneration not only of the populace, but of their rulers also; but being afterwards joined by a turbulent and furious rabble, they fell into discredit‡.

The Jansenists carried their austerities so far, that they called those persons who put an end to their own lives by their excessive abstinence or labour, the sacred *victims of repentance*, and said that they had been con-

* Fleury, vol. xiii. p. 99. † Ib. p. 205, &c.

‡ Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 95. 206.

sumed by the fire of divine love. By these sufferings they thought to appease the anger of the Divine Being, and to bring down blessings upon themselves, their friends, and the church. The famous Abbe de Paris put himself to a most painful death, depriving himself of almost all the blessings of life, in order to satisfy, as he thought, the justice of an incensed God*.

So famous was the devout nunnery of Port Royal in the fields, that multitudes of persons crowded to live in its neighbourhood, and to imitate the manners of those nuns; and this in so late a period as the seventeenth century. The end that they had in view was, by silence, hunger, thirst, prayer, bodily labour, watching, and other voluntary acts of self-denial, to efface the guilt of their sins, and to remove the pollution of their souls, whether derived from natural corruption, or evil habits. Many persons, illustrious by their birth and fortunes chose this mode of life†.

Dr. Middleton mentions a practice still kept up at Rome, which is equally shocking on account of its cruelty and absurdity. “In one of their processions, in the time of Lent, I saw,” says he, “that ridiculous penance of the Flagellants, or self-whippers, who march with whips in their hands, and lash themselves as they go along upon the bare back, till it is all covered with blood, in the same manner as the fanatical priests of Bellona, or the Syrian goddesses, as well as the votaries of Isis, used to slash and cut themselves of old; a mad piece of discipline, which we find frequently mentioned, and as often ridiculed, by the ancient writers.”

“But,” says he, “they have another exercise of the same kind, and in the same season of Lent, which, under the notion of penance, is still a more absurd mockery of all religion. For on a certain day, appointed annually for this discipline, men of all conditions assemble towards the evening in one of the churches, where whips, or lashes made of cords, are provided, and distributed to every person present; and after they are all served, and a

* Mosheim, vol. iv. p. 382.

† Ib. p. 385.

“ short office of devotion performed, the candles being
 “ put out, on the ringing of a little bell, the whole
 “ company begin to strip and whip themselves near
 “ an hour, during which time the church is as it were
 “ a hell, nothing being heard but the noise of lashes,
 “ and chains, mixed with the groans of these self-
 “ tormentors. The candles being lighted at the tink-
 “ ling of a second bell, they all appear in their proper
 “ drefs *.”

Besides the idea of tormenting the body for the good of the soul, the Platonists especially, as I have observed above, had a notion of exalting the soul by *contemplation*; fancying that the mind contained within itself the elements of all knowledge, and that they were best drawn forth by looking within; and also that communion with God was best kept up by an abstraction of the mind from all corporeal things. These notions chiefly gave rise to what is generally called *mysticism*, with which the minds of the early monks were much tinctured, and which, more or less, affected most of those who had recourse to bodily austerities. But others without taking any particular pains to torment the body, gave themselves almost wholly to contemplation.

This turn of mind, giving great scope for the flights of fancy, produced very different effects on different persons; and in some it operated as an antidote to the vulgar superstition of the church of Rome, in which hardly any thing was attended to for many ages besides mere *bodily exercises*. For though the ideas of the Mystics were very confused, they had a notion of the necessity of aiming at something of *inward purity*, distinct from all ritual observances. Nay these notions led some of them (seeing the abuse that had been made of positive rites) to renounce them altogether, even those of divine appointment, as baptism and the Lord's supper.

Mosheim says, that if any spark of real piety subsisted during the reign of papal superstition, it was among the Mystics, who, renouncing the learning of the schools, and the ceremonies of external worship, ex-

* Letters from Rome, p. 190, &c.

horted their followers to aim at nothing but internal sanctity of heart, and communion with God, the center and source of holiness and perfection. Hence the Mystics were loved and respected by many persons who had a serious sense of religion, but he adds, they joined much superstition with their reveries*.

On some persons these notions had a very unfavourable effect. In the thirteenth century there was formed a society called *the brethren and sisters of the free spirit*, called by the Germans *Beghards* or *Begats*, a name which had been usually given to those who made a profession of extraordinary piety. In France they were called *Beghines*. They went from place to place, begging their bread, and neglecting all kinds of labour, as obstacles to divine contemplation. They maintained that every man, by the power of meditation, and calling off his mind from sensible objects, might be united to the Deity in an ineffable manner, so as to become a part of the godhead; in the same sense in which Christ was, and thereby became free from all obligation to laws human or divine. In consequence of this, they treated all the ordinances of the gospel with contempt, as of no use to *perfect men*. Some of these poor wretches were burnt in the inquisition, and endured various other persecutions†.

We even find some who carried their notion of the abstraction of the mind from the body to such a degree, that they fancied that when the mind had attained to a certain pitch of perfection by means of contemplation, no act in which the body only was concerned could affect it; so that they might indulge themselves in any sensual pleasure without contracting the least defilement of soul. The consequences of this opinion could not but be exceedingly pernicious.

Some of the spiritual brethren in Flanders (and who, as Mosheim says, were patronized by several of the reformed churches) maintained that the Deity was the sole operating cause in the mind of man, and the immediate author of all human actions; and consequently that the distinction of good and evil was groundless,

* Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 302. † Ibid. vol. iii. p. 124.

that religion consisted in the union of the soul with God, attained by contemplation and elevation of mind, and that when this was gained, all indulgence of the appetites and passions was perfectly innocent *. Margaret Poretta, who made a shining figure amongst the Beghards, and who was burnt at Paris in 1310, wrote an elaborate treatise, to prove that the soul, when absorbed in the love of God, is free from restraint of every law, and may freely gratify all its natural appetites without contracting any guilt †.

These licentious maxims were ascribed by the Jesuits, but probably without reason, to the Quietists in general, a sect which arose in 1686, and gave great disturbance to the court of Rome. The inquisition put many of these sectaries in prison, and among others Molinos who was one of the chief of them, and they put him to the torture in order to discover his accomplices. Letters were also written to all the bishops of Italy to exhort them not to suffer Quietism to take root in their dioceses. But notwithstanding this, the sect made such progress in a short time, by the external marks of mortification, devotion, contemplation, abstraction of mind, and a pretended intimate union with God, that many persons of condition adopted their sentiments; and even some cardinals were infected by them. On this the popes and the Jesuits exerted themselves so much, that in a general congregation of the inquisition, Molinos was condemned to perpetual imprisonment, and to renounce his opinions ‡.

This sect made great progress in Italy in 1696, and increased notwithstanding all the opposition which was made to it. The pious Fenelon, archbishop of Cambray, gave into this visionary system, and his humility and excellent disposition appeared, together with his weakness of mind, and bigoted attachment to the church of Rome, in his readiness to recant, and condemn his own writings when they were censured by the pope.

* Mosheim, vol. iv. p. 103. † Ibid. vol. iii. p. 202.

‡ Histoire des Papes, vol. vi. p. 381.

Madame Bourignon was a woman who distinguished herself much by an attachment to the same system. She maintained that the christian religion consisted neither in knowledge nor in practice, but in a certain internal feeling, or divine impulse, that arises immediately from communion with God *.

Something similar to the principles of the Quietists are those of the Quakers in England; who, though they are far from substituting any thing in the place of virtue, yet expect supernatural illumination and assistance, to enlighten the mind, and to form it to virtue. They maintain that there is concealed in the minds of all men, a certain portion of the same light or wisdom that exists in the supreme being, which is drawn forth by self converse and contemplation. This divine light they usually called the *internal word*, or *Christ within*. But many of the modern Quakers make this hidden principle to be nothing more than that of natural conscience, or reason; though in this they certainly depart from the genuine principles of their ancestors, on which their sect was founded. The primitive Quakers (even as the more rigid among them at present do) certainly pretended to speak and act by the same kind of inspiration by which the apostles themselves acted, and therefore they made no greater account of the apostolical writings or of the scriptures in general, than of their own suggestions.

As the last effort of human ingenuity and depravity, I shall give a short account of the sophistical casuistry of the Jesuits; a religious order which arose after the reformation, and which was for some time esteemed to be the great bulwark of the papal power, but is now, in consequence of their becoming suspected by the civil powers, happily abolished.

They employed all the force of their subtle distinctions to sap the foundations of morality, in order to accommodate themselves to princes, and great men, who generally chose their confessors from their body; and in process of time they opened a door to all sorts of licentiousness. Among other things they represent

* Mosheim, vol. v. p. 65.

ed it as a matter of indifference what motives determined the actions of men ; and taught that there is no sin in transgressing a divine law that is not fully known to a person ; or the true meaning of which is not perfectly understood by him, or that is not even present to his mind at the time of action. They also maintained that an opinion or precept may be followed with a good conscience, if it had been taught by any one doctor of considerable reputation, even though it be contrary to the judgment of him that follows it, and even of him that recommends it. This they called the doctrine of *probabilty*.

They also held what they called the doctrine of *philosophical sin*, according to which an action that is repugnant to the dictates of reason might not be offensive to the Deity. They held that wicked actions might be innocently performed, if persons could in their own mind, connect a good end with them, or as they expressed it *direct their intentions right*. Thus a man who kills his neighbour in a duel would be acquitted by them, if, at any time, he had turned his thoughts from the principle of revenge, to that of honour, &c. Agreeably to this, they even held that an oath might be taken with mental additions and reservations. This, however does not agree with their being charged with paying no attention to the motives with which actions are performed ; but it agrees very well with their maintaining that the sacraments produced their effect by their own virtue, and immediate operation, or what they called *opus operatum*. But it cannot be supposed that all these maxims were held with perfect uniformity by them all *.

The folly and wickedness of these maxims were admirably exposed by the famous Paschal, in his *Provincial Letters*, which, for their excellent composition, and good sense, were read with the utmost avidity, and the highest approbation through all Europe ; in consequence of which their doctrines were universally exploded, and held in the greatest abhorrence by all men. Indeed the extreme odiousness of them contributed not a little to the downfall of the order.

* Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 468; vol. iv. p. 355. &c.

It is a dangerous maxim, not of the Jesuits only, but of the divines of the church of Rome in general, to distinguish between *contrition* and *attrition*; allowing great merit even to the latter, though it consists of any kind of sorrow on the account of sin, even for the loss or disgrace that it brings upon a man, without any resolution to sin no more. Such a sorrow as this, they say, makes the sacrament of *penance* effectual. This was settled at the council of Trent, though the protestants thought that it struck at the root of all religion and virtue *.

But the most flagrant instance of immorality with which the church of Rome is charged, is the holding that no faith is to be kept with heretics; and upon this principle the council of Constance acted, when the safe conduct which the emperor Sigismund had given to John Huss the Bohemian reformer, was declared to be invalid, as given to an heretic, on which he was arrested and condemned to the flames. From this time it was the opinion of many in the church of Rome, that no promise made to an heretic is binding.

Pope Eugenius authorized Uladisslaus king of Hungary, to break a solemn treaty with Amurath, emperor of the Turks, which ended as it might be wished that such horrible prevarication might always end. The Turk carried a copy of the treaty into the field of battle, and displaying it in the beginning of the engagement, pronounced aloud, "Behold, O Jesus, these are the covenants which thy christians, swearing by thy name, made with me. Now therefore, if thou art a God, revenge these injuries to me, and to thyself, upon their perfidious heads." The consequence was, that the Turks being exceedingly exasperated, and the christians dispirited, the latter were put to flight; and both the king and the cardinal who had urged him to break the peace, and who was along with him, were killed upon the spot.

I have not found any public or general declaration on the subject of keeping no faith with heretics, but that of Clement IX. who, in his *Acts*, printed at Rome

*Burnet on the Articles, p. 348.

in 1724, expressly declares that all promises or stipulations made in favour of protestants, are entirely null and void, whenever they are prejudicial to the catholic faith, the salvation of souls, or to any rights of the church; even though such engagements have been often ratified, and confirmed by oath.

I have no doubt, however, but that the catholics of this day would reject this doctrine with as much abhorrence as protestants themselves; and indeed, if it had not been a general opinion with them, that oaths and subscriptions prescribed by protestants were binding, no reason can be given why they should not have taken the oaths which have been employed in this country to prevent them from enjoying the advantages of other subjects; and yet in all the time since the government of this country has been protestant, no such instance has been produced. The catholics have universally submitted to their exclusion from all places of honour and profit, the payment of double taxes, &c. &c. without ever endeavouring to relieve themselves by a declaration or oath, which the protestants say they would not consider as binding, and for the violation of which they might, it is said, be at least sure of obtaining an absolution at Rome. But even there, it is very probable, that no such absolution would now be given.

It is to be hoped, that in many other respects catholics do not lay the stress they have been formerly taught to do on things foreign to real virtue, that is, to good dispositions of mind, and a good conduct in life; as it is to be lamented, that many protestants are far from being free from all superstition in these respects. But now that the minds of men seem to be so well opened to the admission of religious truth in general, errors so fundamental as these which relate to *morality*, will hardly remain long without redress. It will be happy if the reformation of christians in doctrine and discipline be followed by a suitable reformation in practice.

THE
HISTORY

OF THE
Corruptions of Christianity.

PART X.

*The History of Ministers in the Christian Church, and
especially of BISHOPS.*

THE INTRODUCTION.

THE christian church was served originally (exclusive of the apostles and other temporary officers) by *Elders* and *Deacons* only; the former being appointed for spiritual matters, and the latter for civil affairs. They were all chosen by the people, and were ordained to their office by prayer, which, when it was made on the behalf of any particular person, was in early times always accompanied with the imposition of hands. For the sake of order in conducting any business that concerned the whole society, one of the elders was made *president* or *moderator* in their assemblies, but without any more power than that of having a single vote with the rest of his brethren. From this simple constitution, it is certainly astonishing to consider how these *servants of the church*, came in time to be the *lords of it*, and of the world; and it is curious to observe the various steps by which this change was made.

SECTION I.

The History of Christian Ministers till the Fall of the Western Empire.

THE first change in the constitution of the primitive churches, was making the most distinguished of the elders to be *constant president*, or moderator, in their assemblies, and appropriating to him the title of (ἐπίσκοπος) or *bishop*, which had before been common to all the presbyters or elders, but without giving him any peculiar power or authority.

Since the first christian converts were almost wholly from the common ranks of life, there could be no great difference in their qualifications for any office, except what natural good sense, or age and experience, might give to some more than to others. In this state of things, it is evident that none of them could have been educated with a view to any employment of this kind. But it was soon found expedient, and especially on account of the controversies which they had with Jews and heathens, as well as among themselves, that their public instructors, and especially these bishops, should be men of some learning; and accordingly schools were erected, in very early times, in which young men were instructed in such branches of knowledge as were found to be most useful to them in the discharge of their ministerial duties. Ancient writers say, that the apostle John established a school, or academy of this kind, at Ephesus. However, that which was afterwards established at Alexandria in Egypt, called the *catechetical school*, formed upon the plan of those of the Greek philosophers, was particularly famous.

A better education, and superior fitness for the more conspicuous duties of christian societies, in expounding the scriptures, giving various instruction, public prayer, &c. would naturally create a greater difference than had been known before between christian

ministers and the people, and for the same reason between the bishops and the elders ; and power and influence never fail to accompany superior qualifications. But it was several centuries before the common people ceased to have votes in every thing that related to the whole society.

The first great change in the constitution of the christian church, was the exaltation of the presbyters into the rank of bishops in churches ; which was, in fact, an annihilation of that important order of men, and threw the government of a church into the hands of one person.

The manner in which this change took place was gradual and easy. Whenever the number of converts in any place became too great for them to assemble with convenience in one building, they erected other places of public worship ; but considering these not as new and distinct churches, but as branches of the old one, in order to preserve the connection with the mother church they did not ordain a new bishop, but had all the ministerial duty done either by some of the former presbyters, or by new ones ordained for that purpose.

In this train things went on till at length the mother church, or some of the dependent churches, sending out more colonies, and to greater distances, the bishop of the mother church (being the only person in the district who bore that name) came to be a *diocesan bishop*, whose elders and deacons presided in all the separate and dependent churches. Very few elders also remained in the mother church, because none were now ordained to that office, except such as lived by the ministry. The church of Rome must have been in this state at the beginning of the fourth century, when Marullus divided it (that is, all the christians in Rome) into twenty-five parishes, appointing one priest for each of them, to instruct the people, and to administer the sacraments. It was the custom of the bishop to send a part of the consecrated bread, after the administration of the eucharist, to each of these dependent churches*.

Sometimes, however, when new churches were

* Suet., A. D. 307. 313.

erected in places at a distance from any capital town, they were governed by new-made bishops, presbyters, and deacons, like the original churches. Beausobre says*, that he believes one cannot find an instance so early as the middle of the third century of a church governed by a single presbyter. These country bishops, called *choroepiscopi*, made but a poor figure in comparison with the opulence and splendor of the city bishops. But before they were generally abolished, which was in the fourth century, their rank and power were very much diminished. In a council held at Antioch, in 341, these country bishops were forbidden to ordain priests or deacons, and had only the power of appointing persons to inferior offices in the church. By degrees the country bishops were entirely abolished (though not in all places till so late as the tenth century) when *rural deans* and *arch priests* were instituted in their place †. After this the system of diocesan episcopacy was fully established. There were bishops in capital towns only, and all the churches within their districts were governed by presbyters, or deacons under them.

As the distinction between bishops and presbyters has been the subject of much controversy between the advocates for the church of England and the Dissenters, I shall produce a few more authorities to prove that originally they were the same order of men.

At first the oldest of the presbyters succeeded of course to the place of president among them. But this ceased to be the case even in the age of the apostles, when the president was chosen by the plurality of votes, and then the title of *bishop*, which before had been common to all the presbyters, was appropriated to him. This, says Suetonius, was in the time of Hyginus ‡

In the age of Cyprian, when distinctions were made among the bishops themselves, and when he himself was the metropolitan of the whole province, and one who was a strenuous advocate for the power and dignity of the clergy, it appears that even the metropolitan bishop had no more authority than to assemble the

* Hist. of Manicheism, vol. i. p. 113. † Suetonius, A. D. 341. 439.
‡ A. D. 142.

clergy of his province, to preside in their councils, and to admonish his brethren. There was no act of a spiritual nature that was peculiar to himself; and in his absence from the church, during his persecution, every part of his office was discharged by his presbyters.

Chrysostom says *, that when the apostle Paul gave orders to Titus to ordain elders in every city, he meant bishops. For, says he, he would not have the whole island of Crete committed to one man, but that every person should have and mind his own proper cure; for so the labour would be easier to him, and the people to be governed would have more care taken of them. For their teachers would not run about to govern many churches, but would attend to the ruling of one only, and keep it in good order. Theophylact also interprets the passage in the same manner, saying that each city was to have its own pastor, and that by *presbyters* in this place the apostle meant *bishops* †. Oecumenius and Theodoret likewise say that the apostle did not commit the charge of that large island to one man ‡, and yet it is not so large as some of our dioceses.

Jerom, on the epistle to Titus, says, that among the ancients, priests and bishops were the same; but that by degrees the care of a church was given to one person, in order to prevent dissention. This he proves at large from many passages in the new Testament. Let the bishops know, says he, that they are above the priests more by custom than by the appointment of Christ §. The same learned Father also says that, at the beginning, churches were governed by the common council of presbyters, like an aristocracy; but afterwards the superintendency was given to one of the presbyters, who was then called the bishop, and who governed the church, but still with the council of the presbyters ||.

At first bishops were appointed by the whole congregation, consisting of *clergy* and *laity*, as they were afterwards called, nor did any church apply to the neigh-

* In Titum, l. v. Opera, vol. x. p. 1700.

† Peirce's Vindication, p. 375. ‡ Ib. p. 343.

§ Opera, vol. vi. p. 198. || Anecdotes, p. 24. 54.

bouring bishops to assist at the ordination. Irenæus was ordained by priests only, and such was the general custom of the church of Alexandria till the beginning of the fourth century *. Cyprian also says that it belonged to the people chiefly to chuse worthy pastors, and to refuse the unworthy.

Afterwards when a new bishop was chosen in any church, it came to be the custom to invite the neighbouring bishops to attend and assist on the occasion; and while this was voluntary on both sides, there was a decency and propriety in it; as it shewed the readiness of the neighbouring bishops to receive the new one as a friend and brother. But this innocent custom had bad consequences, as the attendance of the neighbouring bishops on the occasion, from being *customary*, came to be considered as *necessary*; and as a considerable number had usually attended, it came to be a rule, that it could not be done without the concurrence of *three*, one of whom laid his hand on the head of the new bishop, when he was recommended to the blessing of God by prayer. In the third century this was always done by the metropolitan bishop; at least it was never done without his consent or order. The second council of Nice ordered that bishops should be chosen by other bishops. But in the West the people preserved their right of chusing their bishops till after the reign of Charlemagne and his sons; and it was not taken from them till the council of Avignon in 1050†.

The usual ceremony in appointing a bishop was the *imposition of hands*, which, as I have observed, was originally nothing more than a gesture which was always made use of when prayer was made for any particular person. What is imposition of hands, says Austin, but the prayer that is made over the person‡? Accordingly we find that this ceremony was not always thought necessary. For instead of imposing hands on the bishops of Alexandria, they only placed them on their chair, a custom which continued many centuries§.

* Basnage Histoire des Eglises Reformées, vol. iii. p. 25.

† Ib. p. 24. ‡ De baptismo contra Donatistas, lib. iii. cap. xvi. Opera, vol. vii. p. 410. § Basnage, vol. iii. p. 29.

Though bishops were originally no other than presbyters the manner of their ordination being the same, and the presbyters discharging every part of the office of bishop; no sooner was the distinction between them established, than the bishops began to appropriate certain functions to themselves. It appears by the act of the third council of Carthage, that whereas before priests had the power of assigning the time of public penance, and of giving absolution, as also of consecrating virgins, and of making the chrism (or that mixture of oil and balm with which one of the unctions at baptism was made) without the advice of the bishop, all these things were forbidden by these canons, and given to the bishops *. But the principal thing by which the bishops were distinguished afterwards was the power of *confirming* the baptized, when that chrism was applied.

After the reign of Adrian, when Jerusalem was utterly destroyed, and the Jews dispersed, an opinion began to prevail among christians, that their ministers succeeded to the characters, rights, and privileges of the Jewish priesthood; and this was another source of honour and profit to the clergy. Upon this the presbyters assumed the style and rank of *priests*, bishops that of *high priests*; and deacons that of *Levites* †.

The principal occasion of the great distinction that was made between the clergy and the people, between the bishops and the presbyters, and also among the bishops themselves, was their assembling in synods, to deliberate about affairs of common concern, a custom which began about the middle of the second century; for it cannot be traced any higher. By this means the power of the clergy was considerably augmented, and the privileges of the people diminished. For though at first these bishops, assembled in convocation, acknowledged themselves to be no more than the deputies of the people, they soon dropped that style, and made decrees by their own authority, and at length claimed a power of prescribing both in matters of faith and of discipline.

* Suet. A. D. 397.

† Mosheim, vol. i. p. 145.

For the more orderly holding of these assemblies, some one bishop in a large district was employed by common consent to summon them, and to preside in them; and this being generally the bishop of the metropolis, or the city in which the civil governor resided, he was called the *metropolitan* or *archbishop*. The term Archbishop was first used by Athanasius afterwards by Epiphanius, and from the year 430, it was common in the church*.

When the clergy of several provinces assembled, they appointed officers with a more extensive jurisdiction, and called them *Patriarchs*, or *Primates*. This last term was not used before the time of Leo I. That of *patriarch* was first used by the Montanists, and in time came to be applied to the five principal sees of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem†. These patriarchs were distinguished by particular rights and privileges. They also consecrated the bishops of their respective provinces. They assembled them yearly in council, and all important controversies were referred to their decision, especially where the bishops were concerned; and they appointed vicars or deputies to act for them in the remote provinces. Several places, however, in the fifth century maintained their independence on these patriarchs; and both the emperors and the general councils were obstacles in the way of their ambition‡.

Many of these abuses were promoted by the constitutions of Constantine, who was the first person that assembled a *general council*, to which all the bishops of the christian world were invited. Having made a new division of the empire for civil purposes, he adapted the external government of the church to it. When this division was completed, those who make the correspondence between the civil and ecclesiastical governments the most exact, say that the *bishops* corresponded to these magistrates who presided over single cities; the *metropolitan*, or *archbishop*, to the proconsuls or presidents of provinces, comprehending several cities; the *primates* to the emperors vicars, or lieutenants,

* Sueton, A. D. 281. † Ib. ‡ Mosheim, vol. i. p. 372.

each of whom governed in one of the thirteen great dioceses, into which the whole empire was divided; and the *patriarchs* to the *prefecti prætorii*, each of whom had several dioceses under them. But it is not probable that this subdivision was ever exactly observed. However, the government of the church answered much more exactly to the government of the state in the East than in the West;—and in the western parts of Africa there was little or no correspondence between them *.

In consequence of this arrangement, a bishop in a metropolitan city acquired the power of ordaining and deposing the bishops of the cities dependant upon his metropolis, and also of terminating their differences and providing for their wants in general. But this power was not absolute; since the metropolitan could do nothing without the consent of the bishops of the province. There were also some bishops who had only the title of metropolitan, without any power annexed to it †.

As the metropolitans followed the rank of their metropolis, so the patriarchs or *Exarchs*, as they were sometimes called, followed the condition of the capital cities of their diocese. Thus as Antioch was the capital city of the East, containing fifteen provinces, the bishop of that city exercised a jurisdiction over all the metropolitans, having a power of assembling the councils of the dioceses, &c ‡. Constantinople being made the seat of the empire, the bishop of it, not content with the title of metropolitan, or even of Exarch, was first honoured with that of *Patriarch* as more expressive of dignity and pre-eminence; and thence he took occasion to give a greater extent to his patriarchate, so as to encroach upon the province of the patriarch of Rome §.

As the higher clergy rose above the inferior, so these were not wanting to themselves, but magnified their respective offices in proportion. In the fourth century those presbyters and deacons who filled the first stations of those orders, obtained the name of *arch-presbyters*

* Anecdotes, p. 75. † Ib. p. 63. ‡ Ib. p. 65. § Ib. p. 73.

and *arch-deacons*, and also obtained more power than the rest of their brethren*. It was a considerable time, however, before the offices of priests and deacons came to be confounded as they now are in many respects. But when there was peculiar profit or honour in any of the functions of deacons or archdeacons, they were occasionally bestowed upon the priests, who retained the name of the lower office. An instance of this we have not only in the present office of *archdeacon* in the church of England, but in the *deans* and *chapters* of cathedral churches.

In consequence of all these changes, there did not remain at the conclusion of the fourth century, so much as a shadow of the ancient constitution of the christian church; the privileges of the presbyters and people having been usurped by the bishops; who did not fail to assume the state and dignity suited to their new distinctions. Indeed, long before this time, and even before the empire became christian, a spirit of pride and ambition, that very spirit against which our Saviour so frequently and earnestly cautioned his disciples, had got fast hold of many of the christian bishops. We find in the writings of Cyprian, that in his time many bishops assumed great state, with splendid ensigns of power, as a princely throne, surrounded with officers, &c. The presbyters and deacons also imitated them in some measure; and this last order, being above the offices to which they were originally appointed, had them done by inferior officers created on purpose, as door keepers, readers, grave diggers, &c.

The pride of the bishops was so great in the fourth century, and they set themselves so much higher than the priests, that Ærius a Semiarian, and a great reformer, thought it necessary, to urge among his principal tenets, that bishops were not distinguished from presbyters by any divine right; but that, according to the New Testament, their office and authority was intirely the same. His doctrine in general, by which he endeavours to bring the discipline of the church to its pristine state, excited much disturbance in several provinces of Asia Minor †.

* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 290.

† Ib. vol. i. p. 314.

The wealth and power of the bishops of the greater sees were soon very considerable, so as to make them resemble princes. Pretextatus, designed consul, being pressed to embrace christianity, said, according to Marcellinus, "Make me bishop of Rome, and I will become a christian." And yet the propriety of the clergy in general having no independent fortunes, as well as their not enriching their families out of the revenues of the church, was very evident in those times. Constantine prohibited by an edict any rich man to enter into the church. Jerom was of opinion that none of the clergy should have any property of their own; and Austin admitted none into his church who did not first dispose of all their goods. He did not, however, think this absolutely necessary, but only for their greater perfection *.

Sometimes the revenues of a church were not sufficient for the maintenance of the clergy; and in that case it was not thought improper that they should contribute to their own maintenance by their labour. In some cases this was expressly enjoined. Thus the fourth council of Carthage, held in 389, ordered the clergy and monks to gain their livelihood by some trade, provided it did not divert them from the duties of their office †.

It was very early thought to be of great importance that the clergy should have no secular care that would engage much of their thoughts, and attention. The apostolical canons, which, though spurious, were written in the fourth century, order that bishops should not meddle with the administration of public affairs; and that if they did, they should be deposed. The same orders were given by the councils of Chalcedon, Carthage, Ments, &c. Nay, it appears by the letters of Cyprian, that a clergyman could not even be a guardian or trustee to a child. With this view Constantine exempted the clergy from all public and civil employments. But for the sake of gain, the clergy of those times were too ready to undertake any office or employment whatever. Chrysostom laments that

* Simon on Church Revenues, p. 24.

† Sueur, A. D. 389.

ecclesiastics, abandoning the care of souls, became stewards, and farmers of taxes, employments unbecoming their holy ministry. Bishops, he said, should have nothing but food and raiment, that they may not have their desires drawn after worldly things *.

But at the same time that Constantine and other emperors released the clergy from all obligation to duties of a civil nature, they gave them secular business in another way, viz. by enforcing the rules of church discipline, and by giving the bishops the cognizance of ecclesiastical affairs, and ecclesiastical persons, such as had before been brought to the secular judges †, and Justinian greatly enlarged this kind of authority ‡. The clergy, having thus tasted of civil power, soon got a fondness for it, which required to be restrained. So early as the middle of the fifth century, it was complained that the bishops wished to extend their jurisdiction, and in 452 Valentinian III. made a law, declaring that a bishop had no power to judge even the clergy, but with their own consent §.

In this age, and indeed much later, it was far from being thought improper that the *general regulation* of ecclesiastical matters should be in the hands of the supreme civil power. Constantine made many laws in ecclesiastical matters, as concerning the age, the qualification, and duties of the clergy; and Justinian added many more. Appeals were made to the emperors against the injustice of the synods. They received them, and appointed such bishops to hear and try the causes, as happened to be about the court. The emperors called several councils, they even sat in them, and confirmed their decrees. This was the constant practice of the Roman emperors, both in the East and in the West; and when the empire was divided into many lesser sovereignties, those petty princes continued to act the same part.

Though the regulations established by the clergy were numerous in the time of Constantine, they contained nothing that could justly excite the jealousy of

* In 1 Tim. v. 17. Opera, vol. x. p. 1605. † Sueur, A.D. 356.

‡ Anecdotes, p. 125. § Fleury's seventh Discourse, p. 9.

the emperors ; because it was then universally agreed, that the emperors ought to regulate the ecclesiastical discipline. One book of the Theodosian code is wholly employed on regulations respecting the persons and goods of ecclesiastics *.

A kind of ecclesiastical power was also allowed to many rich laymen, as, in many cases, they had the appointment of the bishops ; at least they could not be appointed without their consent. This right of *Patronage* was introduced in the fourth century, to encourage the opulent to erect a number of churches ; which they were the more induced to do, by having the power of appointing the ministers who were to officiate in them. And it was an old heathen opinion, that nations and provinces were happy, and free from danger, in proportion to the number of the temples they contained †.

As it was deemed inconsistent with the clerical character to have any secular concerns, so in this age this idea, together with that of the greater purity of the unmarried state, made it to be thought not quite proper for the clergy to have wives and families, lest their thoughts should be distracted by the cares of this life ; though marriage was not absolutely prohibited to the priests. This rigour was introduced by the Montanists. These condemned all second marriages, and this opinion of theirs generally prevailed among christians afterwards ; and not only did they refuse to admit to the priesthood those who had been married twice, but even those who were married at all.

So much were the minds of christians in general impressed with these sentiments, at the time that the empire became christian, that it was proposed at the council of Nice, that the bishops, priests and deacons, should cease to cohabit with the wives which they had married while they were laymen. But at the instance of Paphnutius, a venerable old confessor, this did not pass into a decree ; and therefore these Fathers contented themselves, with ordering that priests who were not already married should abstain from it. But even be-

* Anecdotes, p. 99.

† Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 301.

fore this, viz. at a synod held at Elvira, in Spain, in the year 306, celibacy was absolutely enjoined to priests, deacons, and sub-deacons *. However, notwithstanding these regulations, and every provision that was made afterwards to secure the celibacy of the clergy, supported by the general opinion of christians, the marriage of priests was not uncommon in many parts of the christian world, quite down to the reformation.

When learning became less common among the laity in the western parts of the world, even the clergy were often found to be very ignorant; though it was remarkable that there was more literature at this time in Britain, which had then suffered less by the invasion of barbarous nations, than in other parts of the empire. When Constantine had appointed a council at Constantinople, Agathon bishop of Rome, made an apology for the two bishops whom he sent thither as his legates, on account of their want of learning; saying, that to have had a *theologian*, he must have sent to England †. Even in the East several bishops at the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon could not write, so that other persons signed the decrees for them ‡.

It was in part to provide for the better instruction of the clergy, and in part also in imitation of the monastic life, which rose in its credit as the clergy sunk in the public esteem, that first Eusebius bishop of Vercell, and after him Austin, formed in his house a society of ecclesiastics, who lived in common, having him, the bishop, for their father and master; and in time this institution gave rise to the *canons* and *prebends* of cathedral churches §.

* Sueur, A. D. 306. † Ibid. A. D. 680.

‡ Jortin's Remarks, vol. iv. p. 277. § Sueur, A. D. 395.

SECTION II.

The History of the Clergy from the Fall of the Roman Empire in the West, to the Reformation.

IN the former period we have seen a very considerable departure from the proper character of presbyters or bishops, in those who bore that title in the christian church. But in this we shall see a much greater departure, and through the increasing ignorance and superstition in the laity, we shall find such a degree of power assumed by the clergy, as was nearly terminating in the entire subjection of every thing to their will. But in the mean time the different orders of those who sustained a religious character were a check upon each other.

In the first place I shall repeat what was observed with another view in a former part of this work, viz. that a considerable change took place in the idea of the powers supposed to be given to priests by their ordination. Originally nothing was necessary to the conferring of holy orders but *prayer*, and the *imposition of hands*. But in the tenth and eleventh centuries, after the introduction of the doctrine of transubstantiation, a new form was observed, viz. the delivery to the priest of the vessels in which the eucharist was celebrated, with a form of words, expressing the communication of a power of *offering sacrifices to God*, and of *celebrating masses*. Also a new benediction was added, which respected the new doctrine of penance and absolution. For the bishop, in laying on his hands, says, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins ye remit they are remitted, and whose sins ye retain they are retained*. According to the system now received in the church of Rome, the priests have two distinct powers, viz. that of *consecrating*, and that of *absolving*. They are ordained to the former by the delivery of the vessels, and to the latter

by the bishop alone laying on his hands, and saying, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost, &c.* And it is said that the bishop and priests laying on their hands *jointly*, which from ancient custom is still retained among them, and which was the only proper ceremony of ordination, is nothing more than declaring, as by their suffrage, that such a person ought to be ordained *.

In the former period we saw that the bishops began to reserve to themselves the power of confirming after baptism. This was fully asserted in this period. When the Bulgarians were converted to christianity, which was in the ninth century, and their priests had both baptized and confirmed the new converts, pope Nicholas sent bishops among them, with orders to confirm even those who had been already confirmed by the priests †. However, when the doctrine of transubstantiation was established, it was not possible that the bishops, with respect to their spiritual power, should stand higher than the priests: for what power can be superior to that of making a God? And yet we find that the schoolmen endeavoured to make the episcopate to be a higher degree and extension of the priesthood.

In this period the priests assumed several new badges, or signs of their character, and these were generally borrowed from the heathen ritual. Thus the *shaven head* and *surplices* were borrowed from the Egyptian priests, and the *crozier*, or *pastoral staff*, was the *lituus* of the Roman augurs ‡.

Now also we find what seems to be a quite new order in the church, but in fact it was only an extension of power in the orders that existed before, without any addition to the spiritual character. This is the rank of *Cardinal* in the church of Rome. These cardinals, though they were not heard of in former times, now have the rank of princes in the church, with the sole power of choosing the pope. It is about the end of the sixth century, and especially in the letters of pope Gregory, that we first meet with the term *cardinal priests* and *cardinal deacons*, but they were then in many other churches, besides that of Rome §.

* Burnet on the Articles, p. 355. † Ib. p. 338.

‡ History of Popery, vol. iii. p. 340. 355. § Anecdotes, p. 222.

As the term *cardinal* signifies *chief*, or the *principal*, the cardinal priests in the church of Rome are supposed by some to have been those priests whom Marullus, mentioned above, set over the twenty-five parishes into which he divided the church of Rome, with priests and deacons under them, so that being next in rank to the pope, they rose in power and wealth as he did. But till the eleventh century these cardinal priests held no considerable rank, and they were not admitted into their councils, till the year 964. Or, though they might assist at them, and likewise at the nomination of the popes, as part of the body of the clergy, they were always named after the bishop; but from this time it became the interest of the popes to advance their dignity. Still, however, there remain traces of their former rank. For the popes never call themselves cardinals, but bishops. They also call bishops their *brothers*, but the cardinals their *beloved children*.

It was only in the year 1059 that the cardinals appear to be necessarily joined with the clergy in the election of a pope, but about a hundred years after this they obtained of Alexander III. that they should have the sole nomination; and since that time they have been continually gaining new privileges and dignities. They are now considered as the pope's great council, and no oath of fidelity is required of them. Innocent IV. in 1244, ordained that when the cardinals rode out they should always wear a red hat, to shew that they were ready to shed their blood in the cause of the church; and Paul II. about the year 1471, ordained that they should wear robes of scarlet. Whereas all other persons, even kings and emperors, must kiss the pope's toe, the cardinals kiss his hands and mouth. If a cardinal accidentally meets a criminal going to execution he has a power of saving his life; and it is said that none of them can be condemned for a crime but by seventy-two witnesses if he be a cardinal bishop, sixty-two if he be a cardinal priest, and twenty-seven if he be a cardinal deacon*.

In very early times we find a number of inferior

* History of Popery, vol. iii. p. 53.

offices in the churches, with names suited to their business, as *readers*, *sub-deacons*, &c. None of these, however, were considered as distinct orders of clergy, but the last is enumerated as such by pope Eugenius.

Another order of clergy took its rise in these dark ages, and was suggested by the great corruption both of the clergy and the monks in the seventh century; when many of the clergy belonging to great cathedrals formed themselves into regular communities, and were called *canonici*, or *canons*, from observing certain *canons* or *rules*, which were given them by Chrodogang bishop of Ments towards the middle of the seventh century, in imitation of what had before been done by Eusebius of Vercell, and Austin above-mentioned. The rule of Chrodogang was observed by all the canons, as that of Benedict by all the monks*.

A regulation was made respecting this subject in 1059, when, at a council in Rome, it was ordered that those priests who kept no concubines should eat and sleep together, near the church to which they belonged, and have in common whatever revenues they had from the church, studying, and living an apostolical life. This, says Fleury, was the origin of the *canons regular*. A similar order was made by Nicholas II. in 1063.

The bishops were generally at the head of these societies of clergy, and they were considered as his standing council, and during the vacancy had the jurisdiction of the diocese. But afterwards abbots, deans, and provosts, &c. were preferred to that distinction, and several of them procured exemptions from any subjection to the bishop. Our English *deans and chapters* are intirely independent of the bishop, and had their exemption from the bishop's authority secured to them by a proviso in the statute of the twenty-fifth of Henry VIII†. With us those Canons who have no duty whatever are called *Prebends*.

Originally bishops were always chosen by the people, though they would be naturally much influenced in their choice by the recommendation of their pres-

* Fleury's eighth Discourse, p. 9.

† Peirce's Vindication, p. 381, 384.

byters. But afterwards these presbyters set aside the vote of the people altogether; and when these *chapters* were formed, it grew into a custom in England, that the priests who constituted them, being always at hand, and easy to be assembled on the decease of a bishop, should chuse him themselves, without consulting the rest of the priests. They still have the same power nominally, but their choice of a bishop is always directed by the king.

When the bishops, in consequence of their becoming landholders, came to be of great weight in the state, it could not be a matter of indifference to the prince who should be bishops. He would naturally, therefore, interest himself in the elections. Accordingly, we soon find that the bishops of Rome, though they were chosen by the people, could not be confirmed in their office without the approbation of the emperor; and this right in the prince continued undisputed for many centuries. The great authority that Charlemagne exercised respected chiefly the election of bishops, of which he made himself master, with the knowledge and consent of the popes. He did not chuse them himself, but he retained the right of approving, which he signified by delivering to them the pastoral staff and ring which was called the *investiture*, after which they were consecrated by the neighbouring bishops. Thus began the *rights of investiture*, which was a source of so much contention afterwards*.

In the eighth general council, in 869, the emperor and all secular princes were forbidden to meddle with the election of any patriarch, metropolitan, or bishop whatever. And at the council of Bonaventure, in 1087, it was decreed, that if any emperor, king or other secular person, should presume to give the investiture of a bishopric, or any other ecclesiastical dignity, he should be excommunicated†. But by this time the popes had not only emancipated themselves from the power of the emperor, but had arrogated to themselves all power in matters temporal as well as spiritual; and on the subject of investiture, as well as

*Anecdotes, p. 335.

† Histoire des Papes, vol. ii. p. 501.

many others, the emperors of Germany, after a struggle of many years, were obliged to yield. In France, however, the nomination of the bishops was always, in fact, in the hands of the prince.

When the bishops were little more than secular persons, it is no wonder, how contrary soever it was to all the notions of the ancients, that bishoprics should be considered as other estates, and in some cases be given, or descend, to minors. In 925 the pope approved of the appointment of an infant to be bishop of Rheims, another person having the administration of it; an example soon followed by princes, and an evil much complained of by Baronius. In 1478 Sixtus IV. obliged the king of Arragon by giving the bishopric of Saragossa to a child of six years of age; a pernicious example and unheard of till then, says the author of *Histoire des Papes* *. In this however this writer was mistaken.

This example, pernicious as it is here said to have been, has been followed, in one instance, by protestants. For the bishopric of Osnaburgh, having, like other German bishoprics, become a principality, it was agreed after the reformation, that it should be held alternately by papists and protestants. At present it is held by the second son of the king of England, who was appointed to it when he was quite an infant.

In the eighth century not only were private possessions made over to ecclesiastics and to monasteries, but royal domains, such as used to be held by princes; by which means they came into the possession of whole provinces, cities, castles, and fortresses, with all the rights and prerogatives of sovereignty; and thus churchmen became dukes, counts, and marquises, and even commanded armies. The prince thought that churchmen would be more faithful to him than secular persons, and expected that they would have more influence over their other vassals, and keep them better in subjection †. This aggrandisement of the German bishops took place chiefly upon the death of Charles le

* Vol. iv. p. 254.

† Mosheim, vol. i. p. 62.

Gros, when many of the great subjects of the empire made themselves independent *.

By these steps the greater clergy came to be entirely secular men, and to have as much to do in civil business of all kinds, as any other members of the community. Thus in England it was far from exciting any wonder, in the days of popish darkness (whatever would have been thought of it in the time of the apostles) to see bishops and mitred abbots called to the great council of the nation, along with the barons; because, though churchmen, they actually were barons. The parliaments of France also, about the middle of the eighth century, were constituted in the same manner, the bishops attended along with the other grandees.

This great absurdity in politics, as well as in religion, remains as a blot in the English constitution to this day, the bishops being admitted to have a seat in the house of lords, and this evil is the greater in a constitution which pretends to freedom. For certainly these bishops, receiving their preferment from the court, and having farther expectations from it, will, in general, be in the interest of the court, and consequently enemies to the rights of the people. Useful as this order of men is to the court, the time has been, when the presence of the bishops in the great council of the nation gave umbrage not only to the temporal lords, but to the sovereign. Queen Elizabeth more than once expressed her dislike of the close attendance of the bishops at court and in parliament, and she even threatened to send them into the country, to mind their proper business.

It is not possible that any thing should be more foreign to the office of a bishop than to serve in the wars; and yet even this gross abuse naturally arose from clergymen being in possession of the great fiefs which were held by military service. And the habits of those who were made bishops in those times were such, as to make them not wish to be exempted from that obligation. In the seventh century, says Fleury, barbarians, being admitted into the clergy, introduced their habits of

* Suetonius, A. D. 889.

hunting and fighting ; and from that time the bishops possessing large estates were under obligation to furnish men for the defence of it. Charlemagne excused the bishops from serving in person, but required them to send their vassals *. But before his time some bishops distinguished themselves in the wars in Italy, and so early as the year 575 †.

The impropriety of this practice was, however, soon perceived, and afterwards express laws were made to prevent bishops from appearing in the field in person. Mezerai says, that, at the beginning of the tenth century, bishops and abbots notwithstanding the prohibition of councils, still bore arms, and went to the wars ; and the custom continued far into the third race of the French kings ‡.

The utter incompetency of the bishops for the duties of their office, and the turn of the age in general, contributed to give them the same fondness for war that other persons of rank in the state had. And when they could not act contrary to the letter of the law, they sometimes had recourse to methods of evading it, which are ridiculous enough. In the thirteenth century, says Jortin, it was an axiom, that the church abhors the shedding of blood. Therefore bishops and archbishops went to the battle armed with clubs, and made no scruple to knock down an enemy, and beat and bruise him to death, though they held it unlawful to run him through with a sword §.

At length the laws got the better of this custom, and the clerical character being deemed an indelible one, in consequence of the spiritual powers supposed to have been imparted by the sacrament of *orders*, it was ordained, in a council of Rouen, in 1174, that clergymen who had been deposed should not, however, bear arms, as if they were laymen ||.

Originally bishops were not only carefully excluded from all business of a secular nature, but in the exercise of their spiritual power, they were much restrained by the civil magistrates, even after they became

* Fleury, vol. xiii. p. 28. † Sueur. ‡ 1b. A. D. 989.
§ Remarks, vol. v. p. 388. || Fleury.

christians. Justinian, who had a great zeal for the church, forbade the bishops to excommunicate any person before the cause of it had been proved in form; and this was so far from giving offence, that pope John II. thanked the emperor for his zeal in these respects *.

But in this period we find the bishops not only exercising their spiritual power without the least controul, but encroaching greatly on the civil power, and controuling princes themselves in the exercise of their proper authority. To this many circumstances contributed, but nothing more than the admission of the great clergy to seats in the assemblies of the state. The ignorance of the laity also gave great power to the clergy. As these were the only people who could read or write, they were universally secretaries, stewards, treasurers, &c. Hence the word *clerk*, which originally signified a *clergyman* (*clericus*) came to denote an office in the law †.

Owing to these causes and to the negligence of the princes, who were much weakened by their divisions in the ninth century; the bishops were almost masters of the kingdoms of France and Germany, disposing of every thing at their pleasure. Though Arnoul, archbishop of Rheims, was a traitor, and deserving of the greatest punishment, two kings of France, Hugh and Robert, did not pretend to have him judged except by the clergy, in consequence of which he ran no risque with respect to his *life*, and could only have been deposed; and by means of the popes he was confirmed in his see, and continued in it to his death ‡.

The Crusades contributed much to the advancement of the clergy; the Crusaders leaving their estates to their management, and sometimes selling them, in order to equip themselves for those distant expeditions §.

The ceremony of *consecration*, which was introduced in the middle of the eighth century, afforded the priests a pretence to intermeddle with the rights of princes. For in putting on the crown they seemed to

* Anecdotes, p. 171. † Fleury's seventh Discourse, p. 12. 19.

‡ Sueur. A. D. 991. § Hist. des Papes, vol. ii. p. 527.

give the kingdom on the part of God *; and this ceremony was soon deemed so necessary by the superstitious people that no coronation was deemed valid without it, in consequence of which the priests had a real negative on the claims of kings, and in case of a contest the party favoured by the clergy was sure to prevail.

Also the consequence of the excommunications of those times, which was a cutting off of all intercourse between the excommunicated persons and the rest of the world, affected the prince as well as the people. For the man who was not deemed worthy to transact any civil business, was certainly unfit to be a king. After the death of Louis V. Charles of Lorraine was the presumptive heir to the crown of France; but the clergy, who were then the most powerful order in the state, having excommunicated him, he was reckoned disqualified to wear the crown.

But the first remarkable attempt upon the rights of royalty by priests was the deposition of Vamba, king of the Visigoths in Spain, at the twelfth council of Toledo, in 681. On the pretence of his being a *penitent*, he had been cloathed with the monastic habit, though it was unknown to himself, his disorder having made him insensible. For the two characters of *monk* and *king* were deemed to be incompatible. The second example was that of Louis le Debonaire, who had likewise been in a state of penitence, after which the bishops who imposed the penance, pretended that he could not resume the royal dignity †. The opinion that bishops had a power of deposing kings, made such a progress in the eighth and ninth centuries, that the kings themselves acquiesced in it ‡.

The primary cause of the temporal power of the clergy was the *wealth* which they acquired by the liberality of the laity; which, in those superstitious times, knew no bounds. Donations for pious uses were so profuse, as to threaten the utter extinction of all merely civil property; so that no effectual stop could be put to it, but by laymen assuming ecclesiastical titles, and by degrees resuming their property, in the character of lay-impropriations, which has been a subject of

* Fleury, vol. xiii. p. 30. † Ib. ‡ Ib. seventh Discourse, p. 12.

great complaint to the clergy. This was certainly an abuse and an irregularity ; but one evil is often made use of, in the course of divine providence, to correct another.

The notion that temporal and spiritual goods had such an affinity, that the one might be procured by means of the other, could not fail to operate in favour of the wealth, and consequently of the temporal power of the clergy. These were the venders of a valuable commodity, and the rich laity were the purchasers. And were not many ancient writings and charters, &c. still extant, we should not believe how nearly the grant of money and lands to the church, for the good of men's souls, approached to the form of a bargain and sale in other cases. The grants by which estates, &c. were made to the church, were often express stipulations for the good of their own souls, and those of others.

Thus when Ethelwolf tithed the kingdom of England, he said, " It was for the good of his own soul, " and those of his ancestors." An act of king Stephen says, " I Stephen, by the grace of God, king, being " desirous of sharing with those who barter earthly " things for heavenly felicity, and moved thereto by " the love of God, and for the good of my own soul, " and of my father and mother, and the souls of all my " relations, and my royal ancestors ; to wit, of king " William my grandfather, king Henry my uncle, &c. " do, by the advice of my barons, give to God and the " holy church of St. Peter, and the monks thereof, the " tithes of all lands, &c *.

Wealth and power generally go hand in hand, and the one will never fail to introduce the other. With the clergy it was their spiritual power that was the cause of their wealth, and their wealth contributed to create their temporal power. But before the clergy assumed any proper power over the laity, they exempted themselves from their jurisdiction, which they began to do very early, and with the consent of the christian emperors, who did not wish to see persons of

an order which they so much respected brought into the ordinary civil courts. It was therefore only in extreme cases that any of the clergy were brought before them. Athalaric, the Gothic king of Italy, approved of this custom*.

Moreover, as the christian emperors had a respect for the clergy, and a confidence in them, they chose to extend the effects of church censures; whereby it was in the power of the clergy to prevent or punish many offences of a civil nature, so that in time all the bishops had courts of their own; and when the popes got power, it was necessary that the power of the bishops should rise in some proportion to it. Boniface VIII. made a decree by which the bishops might at all times have their auditories, and consequently put the accused in prison. But this was not much regarded, nor had the ecclesiastics a prison before the pontificate of Eugenius I†.

By degrees the dignity of the priests rose so much higher than that of the temporal powers, that it was deemed a thing absolutely intolerable, that a clergyman should be subject to any temporal tribunal; and as the canon law did not punish with *death*, the clergy enjoyed almost an absolute impunity for the commission of any crime whatever. And in those dark and ignorant ages, the disposition of the clergy to violence, and crimes of every kind, was little, if at all, less than that of the laity. It appears in the reign of Henry III. of England, that more than a hundred murders had been committed by clergymen, whom the civil powers could not bring to justice‡. As to the higher ranks of the clergy, it was hardly possible that they should be punished for any crime, on account of their right of appeal to Rome, and the certainty of their finding protection there, especially if they had any difference with their sovereign. Besides, in those times no clergyman could be punished capitally without previous *degradation*, and a priest could not be degraded but by eight bishops, to assemble whom was a great expence.

* Anecdotes, p. 188. † Anecdotes, p. 119.

‡ History of Popery, vol. iii. p. 130.

In that reign of superstition, the clergy could be in no want of plausible *pretences* to interpose in civil affairs. Among others, they pretended to have jurisdiction in all cases of *sin*, in consequence of which, says Fleury, the bishops made themselves judges in all law suits, and even in all wars among sovereigns, and in fact made themselves to be the only sovereigns in the world *. In a council of Narbonne in 1054, persons who refused to pay their debts were excommunicated †. Had church censures extended to no other cases than these, the abuse would not have been much complained of.

The case in which the clergy interfered the most was in things relating to *marriage*. For as incest is a sin, they made themselves judges of the degrees of relationship within which it was lawful to contract marriage. And as dispensations for marriage within those degrees was very gainful, it was their interest to extend those degrees, that dispensations might be more frequently wanted.

Before the time of Justin II. ecclesiastical canons began to encroach upon the province of the secular power in this respect, forbidding the marriage of cousins, and of the children of cousins, and introducing a different method of counting the degrees of relationship, which is not more ancient than pope Gregory or Zachary. According to Fleury, the difference between the canon and the civil law on this subject arose about the year 1065, when two degrees in the civil law were made one by the canon law, the former counting upwards to the common ancestor, and then down again to the persons whose degree of relationship was to be determined. Whereas the custom now was to begin with the common ancestors, and count to the more remote of the two parties. Brothers, therefore, who, according to the civil law, were in the second degree of relationship, according to the canon law were in the first; and cousins german, which were in the fourth

* Seventh Discourse, p. 20. † Fleury, A. D. 1054.

degree, were by the canons brought to the second, &c. *.

Besides this advantageous method of counting the degrees, the clergy likewise added to the number of degrees within which it was not lawful to contract marriage. Mezarai says, that about the end of the tenth century, the degrees of relationship within which marriage was prohibited were extended to seven, which very much embarrassed sovereign princes, who were generally related to one another within those degrees.

Another method of extending the degrees of relationship was by considering the relations of one party, as those of the other. In 557, a council at Paris forbade the marriage of a wife's sister; many persons having then done it, after the example of king Clotaire, who had married the sister of his deceased wife †. Relation by adoption was also made to have the same effect as that by nature. In 734, the pope not only advised to dissolve the marriage of a man with a woman whose child he had before adopted, but to punish him with death ‡. And what will be thought perhaps more extraordinary, the spiritual relationship, as it was called, or that of godfather and godmother, was made to receive the same effect as a natural relation of the same name §.

The number of lawful marriages were also reduced. Second marriages were also reckoned improper, and with respect to the clergy, absolutely unlawful, it being soon imagined to be forbidden by Paul, who says *a bishop must be the husband of one wife*. Epiphanius mentions a person who being a widower married a second wife, that he might not be made a priest. Jerom says we do not desire, but we allow of second marriages ||. In 901 the patriarch of Constantinople, refused to marry the emperor Leo a fourth time, alleging a law which he himself had made, that no person should marry more than twice. After much altercation on the subject, it was agreed in 902, that third marriages should be lawful, but not fourth ¶.

It was thought proper in very early times, that a

* Fleury, vol. xiii. p. 147. † Suet. ‡ Ibid. § Ibid. A.D. 995.

|| Le Clerc's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, A. D. 158. ¶ Suet.

new married couple should have the benediction of the bishop or a priest. Thus in the fourth council of Carthage, in 398, it was ordered that the bride and bridegroom should be presented to a priest for his benediction, and that, out of respect to it, they should abstain from commerce the first night*. This custom of giving the benediction prepared the way for the clergy being considered as the only persons before whom marriage could be legally contracted, and the laity were effectually excluded when matrimony was made one of the seven sacraments. Marriage also came under the cognizance of the clergy by means of the *oath* which the parties took to be faithful to each other. For Fleury says the clergy included within their jurisdiction every thing in which oaths were concerned, as well as where the cause had any connection with things spiritual. Thus on account of the sacrament of marriage, they took cognizance of marriage portions, cases of dowry, of adultery, of legitimacy, and also of wills; because it was supposed that the church ought not to be without some pious legacy†.

The clergy also claimed entire jurisdiction in cases of *heresy* and *schism*, and in matters where the civil law had not interfered, as in respect to usury and concubinage. And because the crime of heresy drew after it the loss of estates, and of all civil rights, even with respect to the sovereign, the clergy could always accuse of this crime any person whom they meant to destroy; and if the prince would not submit to their sentence, he was accused of not believing the *power of the keys*, and accused of heresy‡.

The ordinary jurisdiction of the bishops was much restrained by the *pope's legates*, especially from the eleventh century; and the bishops thus restrained, endeavoured to extend their jurisdiction at the expence of the lay judges by three methods, viz. the quality of the persons, the nature of the causes, and the multiplication of the judges. Boniface VIII. ordained that laymen should have no power over eccle-

* Sueur. † Fleury's seventh Discourse, p. 17. ‡ Ibid.

saistical persons or goods, and the bishops made as many clergy as they pleased, by which means they drew great numbers from the temporal jurisdiction, an abuse which was carried to an enormous extent. Because widows and orphans had been protected by the bishops in early ages, they now undertook all their causes, even those of the widows of kings, and those of kings themselves in their minority. They also took cognizance in all cases in which *lepers* were concerned. Lastly, the bishops multiplied judges, and thereby extended their jurisdiction, establishing their officials in various places beside the episcopal city. The archdeacons and chapters also did the same, and all these had their delegates, subdelegates, and other commissaries *. However, in all great causes, the authority of the bishops was much lessened by the number of appeals to the court of Rome; and afterwards the *inquisition* also encroached upon the jurisdiction of the bishops, as well as on that of the ordinary judges †.

A circumstance which contributed not a little to make the clergy intent upon extending their authority in the state, and to make them formidable in it, was their not being allowed to marry. In consequence of this, great numbers of them became less attached to their respective countries, and made the hierarchy alone their great object. This point, however, was not established without much opposition. A council, held at Constantinople under Justinian II. gave the priests leave to marry, though the popes had enjoined the contrary. Many priests had wives even in the West about the year 1000; but in 1074, Gregory VII. decreed in council, not only that priests should abstain from marriage, but that they who had wives should either dismiss them, or quit their office. But even this law was often disregarded ‡.

That the true motive to this in later ages, was not a regard to purity, was evident, from its being no objection to priests to keep many concubines, even publicly. John Cremenfis, who came to England to

* Fleury's seventh Discourse, p. 18. † Ib. p. 23.
‡ Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 284.

hold a synod for the purpose of prohibiting the marriage of priests, was the very night after the council found in bed with a common prostitute *. Father Simon says, that the priests being prohibited from marriage made no scruple of keeping concubines †. It was in 970 that a synod was held at Canterbury, in which it was decreed that the clergy in England should either part with their wives, or their livings; a law which Dunstan enforced with great rigour. The priests, however, were much averse to this law, and therefore it was found necessary to hold another synod on this subject at Calne, four years afterwards, in which it was finally decided.

With the high rank and the wealth which the clergy acquired, it is not to be wondered that they should not improve in virtue, heavenly-mindedness, and a careful attention to the duties of their office. Complaints of their arrogance, avarice, and voluptuousness, are without end; and yet, vicious as the clergy in general were, they were revered almost to adoration by the ignorant vulgar of those ages. This arose, in a great measure, from the sentiments and customs of the northern nations before their conversion to christianity; which in those days consisted in nothing more than being taught to say by rote, some general principles of the christian religion, being baptized, and changing the objects of their superstitious customs. For these were suffered to continue the same as before, only, instead of being acts of homage to their heathen deities, they were now taught to consider them as directed to the popish saints.

Now these people having been before their conversion absolutely enslaved by their priests, having never been used to undertake any thing, even in civil or military affairs, without their council; when they became christians, they transferred the same superstitious deference to their christian priests; who, we may be sure, did nothing to check it ‡. In the dark ages the profligacy of the clergy perhaps exceeded that of the laity, as the sacredness of their character gave them a

* History of Popery, vol. iii. p. 45. † On Church Revenues, p. 78.
‡ Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 59.

kind of impunity. One Fabricius complains of the luxury of the clergy in his time, towards the end of the tenth century, in the following terms. They no longer saluted one another with the title of *brother*, but that of *master*; they would not learn any thing belonging to their ministry, but committed the whole to their vicars. Their study was to have horses, cooks, maitres d'hotel, concubines, buffoons, and mountebanks; and they applied to the emperor for leave to hunt all sorts of wild beasts *.

Nothing, perhaps, can shew the pride of the clergy in a stronger light, than the decrees of the eighth general council, held at Constantinople, in 869, in which it was ordered that bishops should not go before princes, that they should not alight from their mules or horses, but that they should be considered as of equal rank with princes, and emperors; that if any bishop should live in a low manner, according to the ancient and rustic custom, he should be deposed for a year; and that if the prince was the cause of it, that prince should be excommunicated for two years. In the same council it was decreed that bishops only should be present at councils, and not secular princes; for that they ought not to be even spectators of such things as sometimes happen to priests †. All writers agree in giving the most shocking picture of the depravity of all ranks of men in the tenth century. Among others, see Suenr, A. D. 909.

When the occupation of churchmen and temporal lords differed so very little, it is natural to expect that there would be no great difference in their accomplishments. In the ninth century the ignorance of the clergy was so great, that few of them could either write or read. But one reason of this was that many noblemen and others, wanting sufficient talents to appear to advantage in the field, retired into the church, the great endowments of which were temptations to them. The estates of the church were also often openly invaded, and the ignorant spoilers got possession of the benefices ‡.

* Suenr, A. D. 989. † Ib. A. D. 869. ‡ Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 119.

Britain, being removed from the seat of the greatest rapine and profligacy, had a greater proportion of learned clergy than the rest of Europe, in the greatest part of the dark ages; and Ireland had perhaps a greater proportion than Britain, as they had suffered still less by the ravages of the barbarians.

The very corrupt state of the clergy made the monks, and their monasteries, of great value to the christian world. With them almost all the learning and piety of those ages had an asylum, till the approach of better times.

In the church of England there is a threefold order of ministers, viz. bishops, priests, and deacons. The deacons may baptize and preach, but not administer the Lord's supper; the priests may administer the Lord's supper, and pronounce absolution; and only the bishops confirm baptized persons, ordain ministers, and govern the church. The bishop's diocese is considered as the lowest kind of a church, and the presbyters are considered as his delegates, or curates. But the first English reformers considered bishops and priests as of the same order, and therefore did not require that those who had been ordained by priests should be ordained again by a bishop. Wickliffe, who began the reformation in England, admitted no more than two degrees in the ministerial office, viz. deacons, and presbyters, or bishops. These two, says he, were known in Paul's time, and others are the invention of impious pride.

There is also another deviation from the primitive state of things in the church of England, as the people have not in general the choice of their minister; and the bishops are all nominated by the court. For though the dean and chapter have the nominal choice, the king sends them an express order to chuse such as he shall direct. In the reign of Edward IV. this absurd custom was set aside, and the king himself immediately appointed the bishops; but the old custom was renewed in the reign of queen Elizabeth.

Almost all the inferior ministers are chosen by the bishops, the chancellor, or some lay patrons. When a new rector is to be placed in a parish, the patron of

the living recommends whom he pleases to the bishop, and the bishop has no power to refuse. The rights of patronage to livings are openly bought and sold; and it is not reckoned simony to buy the next right of presentation, provided the living be not void at the time.

THE
HISTORY
OF THE
Corruptions of Christianity.

PART XI.

The History of the PAPAL POWER.

THE INTRODUCTION.

WHEN we consider, that, originally, the bishops of Rome were nothing more than any other bishops, that is, the ministers or pastors of a society of christians, without any power, even within their own church, besides that of exhortation and admonition; it is truly astonishing that the *popes*, who are no other than the successors of those bishops, should have obtained the rank and authority that they have done; and it is hardly possible to conceive how the one should have arisen from the other. There is not, indeed, in the whole history of human affairs, another example of so great a change in the condition of any order of men whatever, civil or ecclesiastical.

From being in the lowest state of persecution, in common with other christians, and having nothing to

do with things of a temporal nature, they came to be the greatest of all persecutors themselves, and rose to a greater height of temporal power (and a power established on the voluntary subjection of the mind) than almost any sovereign, the most despotic by law or constitution ever attained. And from being mere subjects they came to be not only princes, but the most imperious lords of their former masters; and their ecclesiastical power was still more absolute and extensive than their civil power. I shall endeavour to point out the several steps by which this great change was made.

The ground of the papal pretensions to power, in later ages, was the popes being the successors of the apostle Peter, to whom was delivered by Christ *the keys of the kingdom of heaven*. But whatever was meant by that expression, Peter himself assumed no pre-eminence over the rest of the apostles. Paul opposed him to his face, and says that he himself was not inferior to the *very chiefest apostles*. Also, though it be probable that Peter was at Rome, and suffered martyrdom there, it is not probable that he was ever the proper bishop of Rome, or of any particular place; the apostles having a general jurisdiction over the church at large, appointing and directing the conduct of all the bishops; an office to which they appointed no successors at all.

The title of *Pope (Papa)* which signifies *father*, was not originally peculiar to the bishop of Rome, but in early times was commonly applied to other bishops, especially in the greater sees. Thus Cornelius, bishop of Rome, called Cyprian, the pope of Carthage; and it was not till about the beginning of the seventh century, that the bishops of Rome appropriated that title to themselves.

One of the most extraordinary circumstances relating to the papal power, is that, though the foundations on which it rested were entirely changed, and those pretences on which the greatest stress was laid, had not been heard of, or hinted at, for many centuries; yet being continually urged, in dark ages, they came at length to be universally acknowledged, and acquiesced in, even by those princes whose interest it was to op-

pose them. And in time the business transacted at the court of Rome was so great and peculiar, that nothing was more sensibly felt than the want of unity in it, during the great schism in the papacy. All Europe was in the deepest affliction on the occasion; and instead of rejoicing in the division of this enormous controuling power, it was the great object of princes and people, to unite the church under its own proper head. Had the sun been divided, and its light been in danger of being extinguished, the christian world would hardly have been more alarmed than it was; so necessary was the subjection of all christians to *one supreme head of the church*, at that time, deemed to be. The rise and progress of such an amazing power, from so very low a beginning, is indeed a great object, and well deserves to be considered with attention.

SECTION I.

Of the State of the Papal Power till the Time of Charlemaigne.

THE first cause of the increase of power to the popes was the same that enlarged the power of the bishops of all the great cities of the empire; in consequence of which they had the power of calling and presiding in the assemblies of bishops within the provinces to which the civil jurisdiction of their respective cities extended. And, by degrees, as has been observed before, they had the power of ordaining the bishops in their provinces, and a negative on the choice of the people.

The bishops of the most important sees were at length distinguished by the title of *patriarchs*, who had all equal power, and differed only with respect to rank and precedency; and in general the bishop of Rome was considered as the first in rank, out of respect to the city in which he presided. After the see of Rome, the preference was given to the other great sees, in the

following order, viz. those of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. The churches of Africa do not appear to have been subject to any of these patriarchs; and Cyprian, who was bishop of Carthage, in the third century, had the same power that the bishops of Rome had, viz. to assemble the bishops of his province, to preside in their councils, and to admonish his brethren *.

The proper authority of the bishop of Rome, though he was the only person in Italy distinguished by the title of *metropolitan*, did not extend over the whole of Italy, but only the southern parts of it, or those provinces which were called *suburbican*, because they were subject to the *imperial vicar*, who resided at Rome, while all the northern parts were subject to the *vicar of Italy*, as he was called, in temporal matters; and to the archbishop of Milan in spirituals; the vicar of Italy residing in Milan †.

But though the power of the bishops of Rome had no legal extension beyond that of other patriarchs, they had much more authority and influence than other bishops, on account of the dignity of their city, which was the capital of the Roman empire, and likewise on account of the great wealth and large revenues of that see. Moreover, as it had been the custom to appeal to Rome in all great civil cases, so if the bishops of Rome were only equal to the other bishops of the great patriarchal sees (and in early times they were probably superior to them in knowledge and character) it would be natural, when differences of opinion arose, for each party to wish to have the sanction of the see of Rome. On these accounts appeals were more frequently made to Rome than to any other place; and this voluntary deference was afterwards *expected*, and then *insisted upon*, christians in general having been by habit disposed to yield to its authority.

The Arian controversy afforded the bishops of Rome several opportunities of extending their power. Athanasius himself engaged the protection of pope Julius; and it was chiefly by the influence of the see of Rome

* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 215.

† Anecdotes, p. 78.

that the trinitarian doctrine came to be established. But before this time, Victor, bishop of Rome, interposed his authority, but without effect, in the controversy about the time of keeping Easter, proceeding so far as to excommunicate all the eastern churches, because they did not conform to the custom of the western church in this respect. But no regard was paid to his decision, though afterwards the council of Nice determined the question as he had done.

On this, and on other occasions, the papal pretensions did not pass unnoticed, or without opposition. Some stand, though an ineffectual one, was always made to every encroachment; and the early popes themselves, who began to usurp a little, and to convert that into a matter of *right*, which had originally been mere *courtesy*, would have been shocked at the idea of a small part of what was done by their successors. A number of *decretal epistles* have, indeed, been alleged, as proofs that the earliest popes always held and exercised a sovereign power in the church. But these were manifestly forged, as the papists themselves now acknowledge; and many facts in the early history of the church, and of the papacy, prove, incontestibly, that the bishops of Rome had no more real power than other metropolitan bishops.

In the sixth council of Carthage, it was concluded by the bishops who composed it, that they would not give way to the encroachments of the bishops of Rome on their rights and liberties, and they gave immediate notice to pope Celestine, to forbear sending his officers among them, "lest he should seem to introduce the vain insolence of the world into the church of Christ." Various other councils also made decrees to the same purpose. But when the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch were oppressed by that of Constantinople, they had recourse to the church of Rome; and by their example inferior bishops appealed thither also, when they were oppressed by the bishops of Alexandria and Antioch*. By this means the bishops of Rome acquired a considerable degree of influence even in the East.

* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 375.

After the prevalence of the Mahometan powers in Asia and Africa, as there remained only two rival metropolitans, viz. those of Rome and Constantinople, they were continually at variance; and at first the bishops of Constantinople, where the emperor resided, had the advantage. These had extended their jurisdiction so much before the reign of Justin, that it comprehended Illyricum, Epirus, Macedonia, and Achaia. Afterwards it extended to Sicily, and many places in the southern parts of Italy, and they contended with the bishops of Rome for the superintendence of Bulgaria and other countries *.

The three other eastern patriarchates having been either abolished or much reduced, the bishops of Constantinople took occasion from it to carry their pretensions to an authority so much higher than before, that John, who was chosen patriarch of Constantinople in 585, assumed the title of *Œcumenical* or *universal bishop*. The title was severely condemned by Gregory the great, who was then bishop of Rome, as tending to diminish the power of other bishops. He even called it *blasphemy*, and a name invented by the devil; adding, that whoever called himself, or wished to be called *universal bishop*, was the fore-runner of anti-christ †. Nay, upon this occasion, by way of contrast, he took the title of *Servus Servorum Dei*, or *Servant of the Servants of God*, and he was the first pope who used that style in his letters ‡.

But not more than eighteen years after the death of this Gregory, viz. in 606, Boniface III. obtained of the emperor Phocas, that the bishops of Rome alone should, from that time, have this very title of *universal bishop*. The circumstance which made the assumption of this title the more odious, besides its having been rejected with so much indignation by the predecessors of Boniface, was its being granted by one who had risen to the empire by the murder of the preceding emperor Mauritius, his wife, and all his children; and who in this manner courted the friendship of the bishop of Rome, whose power in the western part of the empire

* Anecdotes, p. 158. † Sueton, A. D. 595. ‡ Anecdotes, p. 206.

was then very considerable. For the popes acquired a great accession of power, and had much more influence in all civil affairs, in consequence of the removal of the seat of empire from Rome to Constantinople. But they were of much more consequence after the Lombards settled in Italy. For by taking part sometimes with them, and sometimes with the emperor, they made themselves formidable to both, and by this means their usurpations passed without censure.

That the authority of the sees both of Constantinople and of Rome arose from the dignity of the cities, is evident from this circumstance, viz. that before the year 381, the see of Constantinople had depended upon that of Heraclea, which had been the former metropolis of the province, but from that time the council ordained, according to the wishes of Theodosius, that the bishops of Constantinople should hold the principal dignity after that of the bishops of Rome *. But afterwards, viz. in a council held at Constantinople, under Justinian II. it was ordained that the patriarchs of Constantinople should be equal to those of Rome.

It was in the reign of Valentinian III. that, by the influence of Leo, the popes gained the greatest accession of power in the West, within the period of which I am now treating. Before this time the popes had no proper authority beyond the suburbican provinces †. But this emperor extended their authority to all the bounds of his empire, even into Gaul, and ordered that whatever should be done in that country without the authority of the pope, should have no force ‡. The bishops assembled at Rome in 378, approved of this augmentation of the power of the popes §.

An opportunity soon offered of making use of this power. For in the year 440, Chelidonius, being deposed in Gaul, appealed to the pope, who received him into communion, and by the authority of Valentinian reinstated him. This was the first encroachment that was made by the popes on the liberties of the Gallican church ||. It was not, however, till a long time

* Suetonius, A. D. 381. † Anecdotes, p. 81. ‡ Basnage, vol. i. p. 243. § Mosheim, vol. i. p. 287. || Basnage, vol. i. p. 243.

after this, that any direct application was made to the popes for preferment in France. Auxanius bishop of Arles was the first bishop in France who, in the year 543, sent to ask for the *pallium*, or the archiepiscopal cloak from Rome. His predecessor had it without asking for ; and in this case the pope answered, that he must first have the consent of the king of France *.

After the reign of Valentinian III. the bishops of Rome, finding their powers enlarged, and that they had the superintendence of all the churches of the West, sent their vicars regularly into the provinces, whenever there was the least pretence for it, and thus watched every opportunity of extending their jurisdiction. The first vicars which they established were those of Illyricum, and of Thessaly. And the pope was the more readily acknowledged to be patriarch of all the West by the Greeks, as well as by the Latins ; as the former wished to have the bishop of Constantinople to be considered as patriarch of the East †.

In 517, pope Hormisdas appointed bishops of the respective countries his vicars in Gaul, Spain, and Portugal. They were glad to be so honoured, as it gave them a rank above their brethren ; and by this means the popes greatly extended their authority in those countries ‡. But before this time, viz. in 453, the popes began to have spies and informers at the court of Constantinople. Leo recommended one of them to the emperor, calling him his *legate*, appointed by him to solicit at the emperor's court all things relating to the faith and the peace of the church, against the heretics of the age. This was the beginning of the pope's legates at Constantinople. They were afterwards called *Apocrisarii* §.

The popes were also very attentive to send legates into nations newly converted, and thereby subjected them to their patriarchate. Thus the Bulgarians being converted, the pope immediately sent an archbishop thither, which was the beginning of the contest between the patriarchs of Rome and those of Constantinople ||.

* Sueur, A. D. 543. † Anecdotes, p. 144. ‡ Sueur.
§ Jortin's Remarks, vol. iv. p. 298. || Anecdotes, p. 145.

After the fall of the western empire the popes found themselves in a peculiarly favourable situation for the increase of their power, the emperor being then at a distance, and therefore obliged to take some pains to keep on good terms with them, in order to keep up his interest in the country. Thus Justinian paid the pope many compliments, and called the see of Rome the chief of all the churches, hoping by this means to drive the Goths out of Italy *.

Also the people of Rome, and of the neighbouring districts, disliking both the Greeks and the northern invaders, and having no other head, looked up to the popes for protection, and at length took an oath of allegiance to Gregory II. But they considered him as their chief, not as their master, meaning to form a republic, governed by its own laws †.

As the popes extended their power, they began to provide a broader basis for it. Leo was the first who claimed jurisdiction over other churches, as successor to St. Peter; and when it was decreed, at the council of Chalcedon, that the see of Constantinople should be second to that of Rome with respect to rank, assigning as a reason for it the pre-eminence of the city, this pope was much dissatisfied, because his pre-eminence was not founded on something more stable than the dignity of the city, and wished to have it rest on the authority of St. Peter as the founder of the see ‡. From this time we find this foundation for the authority of the see of Rome urged with the greatest confidence; and what is most extraordinary, it seems never to have been disputed. In a synod held at Rome in 494, Gelasius said that the church of Rome ought to be preferred to all others, not on account of the decrees of councils, but for the words of our Saviour Jesus Christ, when he said, *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church* §. But there has been much dispute about this decree, and the meaning of it.

It was some time, however, before the popes thought of claiming absolute *infallibility*, as the successors of

* Suetonius, A. D. 534. † Anecdotes, p. 240, 246.

‡ Suetonius, A. D. 451. § Ibid.

an infallible apostle. The first pope who seems to have made this claim was Agatho, who, in an epistle to the sixth general council, held at Constantinople in 680, said that the church of Rome never erred, nor can err in any point : and that all the constitutions of the church of Rome, ought to be received as if they had been delivered by the divine voice of St. Peter *. But before this time there had not been wanting persons who flattered the pride of the popes by very extravagant encomiums. Thus in the fifth century Ennodius, a flatterer of pope Symmachus, maintained that the Roman pontiff was “ constituted judge in the place of “ God, which he filled as the vicegerent of the Most “ High †”.

With this increase of real power and consequence, we may naturally expect additional higher *titles*, and more *splendour* ; and in this the popes were by no means deficient ; and as they approached to the rank of sovereign princes, they omitted none of the usual forms, or symbols of royalty. But in this period, as they had not attained to the power, so they did not assume all the pomp that they afterwards appeared in.

As the christians affected the ceremonies of the heathen worship, the popes were ready enough to avail themselves of it, when it might add to their personal dignity. Accordingly as the office of *Pontifex Maximus* had been of great dignity in Rome, and had generally been assumed by the emperors ; from the end of the fourth century, the bishops of Rome were often called *Pontiffs*, and their office the *Pontificate*. They were also sometimes called *sovereign prelates* or *sovereign priests* ‡. But the title of *bishop of bishops* was not given to the pope seriously in the five first centuries.

The ceremony by which respect is generally shewn to the pope is *kissing his toe*, which was also done to the Pontifex Maximus of heathen Rome, and was demanded by Domitian, Dioclesian, and some others of the emperors, who were likewise chief pontiffs. This civility was first shewn to pope Constantine I. by the

* Hist. of Popery, vol. ii. p. 5. † Mosheim, vol. i. p. 443.
‡ Suetonius, A. D. 214.

emperor Justinian II. at Nicodemia. He did it out of voluntary respect, but it was afterwards claimed as a right even from crowned heads *.

The custom of carrying the pope on men's shoulders after his election, which seems to have been borrowed from the custom of some of the northern nations, in the choice of their chiefs or princes, was first used by Stephen II. He also had all his *bulls* or *edicts* sealed with lead †. Like other sovereigns, the popes even in this period, made use of the plural number, in speaking of themselves. This is said to have been begun by Boniface III. about the year 606; who, in approving the choice of a bishop, used the words, *Volumus et jubemus, we will and command* ‡. Afterwards the popes proceeded to assume other titles, and forms, not only of royalty, but even of *divinity*; which having been first assumed by the princes of the East, were from them adopted by the Roman emperors, and from them by the popes. A particular account of them may be seen in Sueur, A. D. 549.

So early as the fourth century, the bishops of Rome surpassed all their brethren in riches and splendour, which exceedingly dazzled the common people; and so great a prize being contended for, there were often great tumults in Rome on the election of a pope, attended sometimes with murder, and violence of all kinds. Many were killed on both sides in 368, during the contest between Damasus and Ursicinus.

Notwithstanding the power assumed by the popes, and though in many things they acted independently of the emperor, and even opposed him, they were still his *subjects*, and upon some occasions he treated them as such. The election of the bishop of Rome was not deemed valid without the consent of the emperor, and Justinian deposed two popes. But when there was no more any empire in the West, little account was made of the consent of the emperor; though the popes kept up a formal submission to the emperors of the East against the Lombard princes till the time of Leo Isauri-

* History of Popery, vol. ii. p. 10.

† Ibid. 606.

‡ Sueur, A. D. 752.

cus *. And though Constantine Pogonatus released the popes from their usual payments for their confirmation, he expressly retained the right of confirmation †.

The Gothic kings of Italy also considered the popes as their subjects. And it appeared in the dispute between Symmachus and Laurentius, in 501, when Theodoric was king of Italy, that the popes then acknowledged the authority of the kings, though they were heretics; that they requested of them permission to hold national councils, and that they appealed to them when they were charged with crimes, and submitted to their judgment. Athalaric, to prevent such mischiefs as had been occasioned by former schisms at Rome, made a rigorous edict, prescribing the manner in which the election of bishops and metropolitans should hereafter be made. This edict was drawn up by Cassiodorus, and nobody considered this as an attack upon the authority of the church ‡.

The temporal princes under whom the popes lived, sent for them, as well as other bishops, and employed them in embassies, whenever they thought proper to make use of them. Pope John I. was sent by Theodoric to Constantinople, to obtain of the emperor Justinian I. the revocation of an edict, which ordained that the churches of the Arians should be put into the hands of the catholics §.

When the empire of the Lombards was entirely put an end to in Italy, the nomination of the popes, at least the right of confirming them, was still in the hands of the temporal princes. Adrian, with his whole synod, acknowledged this power in Charlemagne, and Gregory VII. was himself confirmed in the papacy by that very emperor whom he afterwards deposed. Symmachus had the effrontery to maintain to the emperor Anastasius, that the dignity of the pope was superior to that of the emperor, as much as the administration of the things of heaven is above that of the things of the earth, and that even a common priest was superior to him. But he was far from alleging this as a reason

* Anecdotes, p. 209. † Walsh's Hist. of the Popes, p. 97.
‡ Anecdotes, p. 155. § Ib. p. 187.

why the popes should not be subject to the emperor in things of a temporal nature.

One of the prerogatives to which the popes now pretend, is the power of summoning general councils, and of presiding in them. But all the general councils within the five first centuries were summoned by the Emperors. Leo I. joined with many many other bishops in requesting the Emperor Theodosius to summon a council in Italy, but he refused, because he had before appointed one in Ephesus. Nor did the popes, or their legates, preside in general councils in early times; but various other bishops presided in them; and in the first general council, viz. that of Nice, Constantine himself was the principal moderator or director. Speaking to the bishops upon that occasion, he said, "Ye are bishops of things within the church, but I am bishop as to externals."

SECTION II.

The History of the Papal Power from the Time of Charlemagne to the Reformation.

THE first thing that I shall notice in this period, is the changes that were made from time to time with respect to the election of the popes, and the confirmation of them in their office. It is certain that for many centuries the popes could not be consecrated till their election had been approved of by the emperors; and in general a sum of money had been given at the same time, till it was remitted, as I have observed, by Constantine Pogonatus. The same right of confirming the popes was exercised by the Goths, by Charlemagne, and his successors the emperors of Germany. But in 847, Leo IV. was chosen pope without the consent of the emperor, the Romans being then pressed by the Saracens; and finding a necessity of having a head. However they deferred the consecration from April to June,

waiting for the consent of the emperor, and they made an apology for it afterwards.

At length Charles the Bald, having obtained the imperial dignity by the good offices of the popes, discharged them from the obligation of waiting for the consent of the emperor to their election. But from the time of Eugenius III. who was raised to the pontificate in 854, the election of the popes was conducted without the least regard to law, order, or even decency, and was generally attended with civil tumults and dissensions, till the reign of Otho the Great, who put a stop to those disorderly proceedings, and prohibited the election of popes without the previous knowledge and consent of the emperor; and this order was enforced to the conclusion of the ninth century. Gregory VII. however, taking advantage of the divisions of the empire, emancipated the see of Rome from this mark of its subjection to the empire *.

In early times, the bishops of Rome, like those of other cities, were chosen by the people, as well as the clergy. The first considerable innovation that was made in this respect at Rome, was at a council held in 1059, under Nicholas II. when it was ordered that, upon the decease of a pope, the cardinal bishops should first consider of a proper person to succeed; that they should then consult with their cardinal clergy, and then that the rest of the clergy and also the people should give their consent †. But Alexander III. in the middle of the twelfth century, established the sole right of election in the college of cardinals.

After this time the term *cardinal* was confined to the seven bishops within the territory and city of Rome, who had been used to consecrate the Roman pontiff, and to the presbyters of the twenty-eight Roman parishes, or principal churches. To appease the tumults that were made by others of the clergy, who were by this regulation excluded from the privilege of voting, this Alexander III. conferred the dignity of cardinals upon several more of the superior clergy; and to pacify the inferior clergy, he, or some of his successors, for it is uncertain, made the

* Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 121, 208, 280.

† Fleury.

chief of them *cardinal deacons*, giving them also votes in the election. Lucius III. was the first pope that was chosen by cardinals only *. The particular rules that are now observed in the election of a pope were settled in 1178, and may be seen in the *Histoire des Papes*, vol. iii. p. 88.

I shall just add to this article, that the almost universal custom of the popes changing their names upon their election, began with Bocco di Porco, in 884, who changed his name to Sergius, his original name signifying *Hog's Snout*, being thought unsuitable to his dignity.

It is not easy to say whether the spiritual or the temporal power of the popes was the more extravagant, but the temporal power preceded the spiritual, and no doubt laid the foundation for it. Though other pretences were alleged. But there is no great difficulty in making merely ostensible pretences to be received, when there is sufficient power to enforce them; and it was presently after the commencement of this period, that the popes acquired that amazing accession of property and power, which placed them on a level with other princes of Europe.

The first large accession was made from the spoils of the Lombards in Italy, with whom Stephen II. had quarrelled, and against whom he undertook a journey to France, to solicit the aid of Pepin king of France, who promised that if he should drive out the Lombards, he would give the popes the exarchate of Ravenna, and the Pentapolis. From their acquisition of the latter, which was made in 774, the popes ceased to date their letters by the reigns of the emperors †. This acquisition was evidently made by such policy as is employed by secular princes to increase their dominions. But Stephen, like other artful princes, was not at a loss for some colour of right, for he pretended that this territory belonged to him, as being the spoil of an heretical prince. For the Lombards, as well as the Goths, were Arians.

When Charlemagne afterwards put an entire end to

* Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 271. † Anecdotes, p. 255, 257.

the empire of the Lombards in Italy, the whole of the exarchate, the capital of which was Ravenna, was given to the popes. He was probably induced to make this large grant of land to the church of Rome, by a pretence, which was about this time made, that Constantine the great had made a similar grant of territory to the same church; though it is now universally agreed that this donation of Constantine was a forgery. Notwithstanding these large grants, both Pepin and Charlemagne reserved to themselves the sovereignty of all these lands in Italy. But this was afterwards surrendered to the popes by Lothair I. *

The last acquisition the popes made was that of the sovereignty of Rome, the inhabitants of which had always acknowledged the emperor as their sovereign. But in 1198 the prefect of Rome received his office from the pope, and not from the emperor†. From this time, the popes have been as properly independent as any sovereign princes in Europe.

From the ninth to the thirteenth century, the wealth or revenues of the pope did not receive any considerable addition; but from this time they were vastly increased, especially under Innocent III. and Nicholas III. partly by the events of war, and partly by the munificence of kings and emperors. Innocent was no sooner seated in the papal chair, than, besides reducing to his subjection the prefect of Rome, as mentioned above, he seized upon Ancona, Spoleto, Assisi, and several other cities, which he pretended had been unjustly alienated from the see of Rome. Nicholas IV. followed the example of Innocent, and in 1278 he refused to crown Rodolph I. before he had confirmed, by a solemn treaty, all the pretensions of the Roman see; and immediately upon that he seized several cities and territories in Italy which had formerly been annexed to the imperial crown, particularly Romagna and Bologna. It was under these two popes that the see of Rome arrived at its highest degree of grandeur and opulence‡.

Like other politic princes, the popes gained these

* Anecdotes, p. 320, 338. † Hist. des Papes, vol. iii. p. 120.

‡ Mosheim, vol. ii, p. 32, 33.

advantages chiefly in consequence of divisions in the families of the temporal powers. The divisions between the kings of France of the second race were more particularly the means of advancing the power of the popes to its greatest height. Those who were condemned in France had recourse to the holy see, and always found protection there. In like manner the popes availed themselves of the contest between the emperors Lewis and Charles, about the middle of the fourteenth century ; in consequence of which the imperial power was quite lost in Italy, the popes seizing upon some of the towns, and others setting up for themselves.

The crusades contributed very much to complete the power of the popes, as temporal princes, and brought business enough of a civil nature upon their hands. For they had not only many dispensations to grant to those who could not go to those wars, but they made themselves judges of all the differences among those princes that went thither *.

But the ambition of the popes was far from being satisfied with the acquisition of an independent sovereignty. They soon began to extend their claims to other territories, and even to the empire itself. For having been accustomed to crown the emperors, they took advantage from that circumstance, together with that of the divisions in the empire, to arrogate to themselves the power of deciding who should be the emperor ; and one or other of the candidates was but too ready to yield to the demands of the pope, in order to secure his interest. In these circumstances John VIII. proclaimed Charles the Bald emperor in 876, in an assembly of the Italian princes at Pavia ; and in the same manner were his two successors chosen. From this nomination of Charles the Bald, Sigonius says that the *empire* has been a fief of the holy see †.

After this, viz. in the eleventh century, the popes assumed the character of lords of the universe, and arbiters of kingdoms and empires. Before Leo IX. no pope claimed this unbounded authority of transfer-

* Fleury's sixth Discourse, p. 20. † Sueur, A. D. 875.

ing territories and provinces from their lawful owners. But this pontiff granted to the Normans, who were settled in Italy, the lands and territories which they had already usurped, or which they should be able to conquer from the Greeks or Saracens*.

Gregory VII. followed the new maxims, and carried them farther, openly pretending that, as pope, he had a right to depose sovereigns who rebelled against the church. This he founded principally upon the power of excommunication. An excommunicated person, he said, must, according to the rules of the apostles, be avoided by every body. A prince, therefore, who is excommunicated, must be abandoned by all the world, even by his own subjects. This pope never made any formal decision of this kind, nor had he the countenance of any council, but he acted upon the maxim.

On the other hand, the defenders of the princes took it so much for granted, that an excommunicated person was subject to all the above-mentioned inconveniences, that they contented themselves with saying, that a prince ought not to be excommunicated; which, says Fleury, was giving the popes a great advantage in the argument. This pope likewise urged that, since the clergy have a right to decide concerning things spiritual, they have, *a fortiori*, a right to decide concerning things temporal. The least exorcist, he said, is above an emperor, since he commands dæmons; royalty is the work of the devil, being the effect of human pride; whereas the priesthood is the work of God †.

Some of the pretensions of this great pontiff were so very absurd, that one would think they must have refuted themselves by the events. In his difference with the emperor of Germany, he says, "We bind him by an apostolical authority, not only with respect to the soul, but to the body. We take from him all prosperity in this life, and victory from his arms ‡."

Later popes continued the same arrogant claims, and the necessity of the times too often induced princes to

* Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 260. † Fleury, vol. xiii. p. 48.
‡ Ib. A. D. 1078.

submit to them, though they had sometimes the spirit to resist. In 1225, Honorius III. applied to the popes the words of Jeremiah i. 20. *I have set thee over the people, and over kingdoms, to pluck up and destroy, &c.* * In the fourteenth century Boniface VIII. in a quarrel with Philip the Fair king of France, asserted that Jesus Christ had granted a two-fold power to the church, a spiritual and a temporal sword; that he had subjected the whole human race to the Roman pontiff, and that whoever dared to disbelieve this doctrine were to be deemed heretics, and stood excluded from all possibility of salvation. The king being still refractory, the pope excommunicated him, but he appealed to a general council, and sent a party of men to bring the pope by force before him. In consequence of this he was apprehended at Anagni, but the inhabitants rescued him. He died, however, presently afterwards, of rage and anguish. His successor Benedict XI. of his own accord, withdrew the excommunication; but by this time the papal power had begun to decline †.

When we consider the effects of excommunication in those dark ages, and the acknowledged power of the popes to direct that dreadful weapon, and also to suspend the exercise of all ecclesiastical functions, than which nothing could impress the minds of men in those times with more terror and consternation (as they imagined their everlasting happiness depended on those functions) we cannot wonder either at the arrogance, or the success of the popes. Robert, king of France, not complying with the pope's decree respecting the dissolution of his marriage, the pope, for the first time, laid the whole kingdom under this interdict, forbidding all divine service, the use of the sacraments to the living, and of burial to the dead. The people terrified by this order, yielded such implicit obedience, that even the king's own domestics abandoned him, except two or three, and those threw to the dogs every thing that came from his table. No person even dared to eat out of any vessel which he had touched. The king, being

* *Histoire des Papes*, vol. iii. p. 164. † *Mosheim*, vol. iii. p. 153.

reduced to this dismal state, was forced to yield, and cancel his marriage *.

The degree to which the popes sometimes carried their rage was truly dreadful. John XXIII. not only excommunicated Ladislas, king of Bohemia, but published a crusade against him; inviting all christian princes to make war upon him, and seize his dominions. His bull upon this occasion contained an order to all patriarchs, bishops, archbishops and prelates, to publish every Sunday and festival day, by the sound of a bell, and with candles lighted, and then extinguished by throwing them upon the ground, that king Ladislas was "excommunicated, perjured, a schismatic, a blasphemer, a heretic, a relapse, a favourer of heretics, a traitor, and an enemy of the pope and of the church." He also excommunicated all his adherents and favourers, till by a return to their duty they should receive absolution; and ordered that whosoever should undertake to bury Ladislas, or any of his partisans, should be excommunicated, and not be absolved but by digging up the body with their own hands, and carrying it out of the place of christian burial; and that the places on which they should lie should be prophane forever †.

So fully was this temporal power of the popes established, that they alone were thought to have the right of disposing of kingdoms; and they were as regularly applied to for that purpose, as the temporal courts for titles of nobility, &c. In 1179, Alexander III. conferred the title of *king*, with the ensigns of royalty, upon Alphonso, duke of Portugal, who under the pontificate of Lucius II. had rendered his province tributary to the Roman see ‡. Innocent III. gave a king to the Armenians in Asia, and in 1204 he made Premislas duke of Bohemia king of that country, and Peter II. king of Arragon. The title of king of Ireland was also a grant of the pope to our king Henry II. and when the Portuguese and the Spaniards were pursuing their discoveries and conquests, the one to the East, and the other to the West, the popes drew the line that was

* Suetonius A. D. 998. † Hist. des Papes, vol. iv. p. 151.

‡ Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 403.

to regulate all their future claims to dominion. These acts of universal despotism were beheld with astonishment, but with silent and passive obedience, by all the temporal powers of Europe.

It was in the eleventh century that the power of the popes may be said to have been at its height. They then received the pompous titles of the *masters of the world*, and of *universal fathers*. They presided everywhere in the councils by their legates. They decided in all controversies concerning religion, or church discipline; and they maintained the pretended rights of the church against the usurpations of kings and princes. But this was not done without opposition both from the bishops, and from the temporal powers*.

In order to preserve this amazing power, it was necessary to keep the clergy as dependent as possible upon themselves, and as little attached to their temporal sovereign. Gregory VII. never forbade the clergy to take an oath of allegiance to their respective sovereigns; but this was done by Urban II. who made an order for that purpose at the council of Clermont. To complete the temporal character of the popes, I shall in the last place observe, that it was common in the twelfth century to see them at the head of armies.

The insolence with which the popes have acted in the height of their power is hardly credible. Gregory VII. obliged the Emperor Henry IV. whom he had excommunicated, and who applied for absolution, to wait three days before he would admit him; though both the emperor, the empress, and their child, waited barefoot in the depth of winter. On the fourth day he was admitted, and as a token of his repentance, he resigned his crown into the hands of the pope, and confessed himself unworthy of the empire, if ever he should oppose his will for the future: and he was not absolved without very mortifying conditions†.

Adrian IV. insulted the emperor Barbarossa, about the middle of the twelfth century, for holding him the left stirrup instead of the right, and at length the emperor was compelled to hold the other stirrup. The

* Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 259. † Fleury, A. D. 1077.

next pope, Alexander III. trod upon the neck of the same emperor, using at the same time this expression of the psalmist, *Thou shalt walk upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under foot.* Ps. xci. 13.

When Henry VI. the next emperor, was crowned by Celestine III. he kneeled before him as he sat in his pontifical chair, and was obliged to take the crown from his feet; and when the pope had kicked it off again, to shew his power to depose him, the cardinals were, at length, permitted to crown the emperor once more. This was done to shew that the imperial crown depended entirely upon the pope*.

Our own country has not been less disgraced by papal insolence. One of the bravest of our haughty Norman princes, Henry II. could not satisfy the pope with respect to the murder of the factious and turbulent prelate Thomas a Becket (of which, however, he was not guilty) till he walked barefoot to his tomb, and was whipped by the monks at Canterbury. King John was excommunicated, deposed, and made to receive his crown again, at the hand of the pope's legate, and to acknowledge himself a vassal of the see of Rome.

In order to evade the tyranny of the popes, it was customary, when the times would bear it, not to dispute their power directly, but to prevent the publication of their bulls. Thus when Paul V. laid the state of Venice under an interdict, they banished those of the clergy who complied with the order, and at length the popes were glad to get Henry IV. of France to make their peace with the Venetians, who threatened to break off from their communion†.

The temporal power of the popes, as I have observed before, was more ancient than the notion of their *infallibility*. This was not known in the times of Pepin or Charlemagne; and though councils were not then deemed infallible, the authority of the pope was held to be subordinate to that. That councils are infallible was not pretended till the popes had been deem-

* Hist. des Papes, vol. iii. p. 112. † Mosheim, vol. iv. p. 219.
s. 3.

ed to be so; the councils attributing to themselves what they had taken from the popes*.

With respect to spiritual power in general, the popes derived much advantage from the ideas of the northern nations in their state of Paganism. For they considered the bishop of Rome in the same light in which they had before done their *archdruid*, and transferred to him that boundless reverence with which they had been used to regard the other. Hence the force of the papal excommunications, which, as under the druids, deprived a person of all the common rights of humanity †.

However, besides the constant opposition of the Greek church, the overbearing authority of the see of Rome was not always submitted to, even in the West. It was particularly opposed by the church of Milan, which in the former period had been a metropolitan church with a jurisdiction independent of that of Rome. In 848 Angilbert, archbishop of Milan, separated entirely from the church of Rome, and continued so nearly two hundred years. At length, however, the popes got the better of this, as of every other opposition.

It is in the ninth century that we find the first seeds of the doctrine of the pope's infallibility. Then, at least, the popes began to talk in a higher strain than usual on this subject; maintaining that they could not be judged by any person, and that their decrees, respecting manners, faith, or discipline, ought to be preferred even to those of the councils themselves if possible ‡. The argument on which this claim was rested was the declaration of our Saviour to Peter, that he would give to him the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and because he likewise said that he had prayed for him, that his faith should not fail, it was concluded that all the successors of Peter at Rome would always maintain the right faith. Weak as this argument is, it was universally acquiesced in, in those dark ages; and the popes acted upon it as upon a maxim that could not be disputed. When the bishop of Constantinople was de-

* Basnage, vol. iii. p. 597. † Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 63.

‡ Basnage, vol. iii. p. 547.

posed in 861, the pope who had been written to on the occasion, but not by way of appeal, said in answer, "If they ought to be heard who sit in the chair of Moses, how much more they who sit in the chair of St. Peter;" and he maintained that no bishop of Constantinople ought to be deposed without the consent of the pope*.

The authority of the popes having gained ground, in the manner that has been described above, the opinion of their infallibility began to appear undisguised and undisputed about the middle of the eleventh century; Leo IX. declaring that the councils, and all the Fathers, had considered the church of Rome as the sovereign mistress, to which the judgment of all other churches belonged, and which could be judged by none; and that all difficult questions ought to be decided by the successors of St. Peter, because that church had never erred from the faith, and would not to the end. This is the first pope who held this language with such firmness. Gregory VII. who succeeded him, with more solemnity decreed in a council, that the church of Rome never had erred, and never will err, according to the testimony of the scriptures, on the ground above-mentioned. Bernard and Thomas Aquinas gave this doctrine the great weight of their authority, and they were followed by all the schoolmen.

Afterwards, however, several of the popes themselves, when they had any particular point to gain, and when the decrees of former popes were quoted against them, made no difficulty of departing from this doctrine. Thus John XXII. in his quarrel with the Fratricelli, who represented to him that three of his predecessors had been of their opinion, answered that "what had been ill determined by one pope and one council might be corrected by another, better informed concerning the truth." But, except in these occasional deviations, the popes asserted their infallibility, and it was generally acquiesced in till the time of the great schism; when almost all the christian world, seeing the popes sacrifice every thing to their own am-

* Sœur, A. D. 868.

bition, dropped the high opinion which they had before entertained of them. Nor was it possible to put an end to the schism, without setting up a council above the popes.

During the time that the doctrine of the pope's infallibility was generally received, the popes frequently spoke as if their decrees had been dictated by immediate inspiration. Thus pope John VIII. says, that he had found that such a thing was the council of God, because that of a long time it had been revealed, by celestial inspiration, to his predecessor Nicholas *.

Such firm hold had the notion of the infallibility of the popes on the minds of men, that some of the greatest men in the christian world, and even since the reformation were not able to shake it off. Father Paul, the great advocate of the state of Venice against the usurpation of the popes, admitted that they ought to be obeyed in all matters of doctrine, and what related to the administration of the sacraments †. It is possible however, that he might make this concession by way of argument, while he was disputing against their power in things of a temporal nature. But this was not the case with the famous Fenelon, archbishop of Cambray, who, when his book was condemned by the pope, publicly declared his entire acquiescence in the decree. He even read it himself from his own pulpit, and exhorted the people to respect and obey it ‡.

Originally, as I have frequently observed, all bishops, and the popes themselves, were chosen by the people. Afterwards the metropolitans interfered and then the princes reserved to themselves the right of approbation, and thus all abbots and bishops were chosen till the time of Henry III. of Germany §. But afterwards the popes claimed the right of nomination to all the greater livings; having made the first attempts of this kind in France, where they took advantage of the weakness of that monarchy. They then began to give out, that the bishops of Rome were appointed by Jesus Christ to be the supreme legislators

* Sueur, A. D. 875.

† Basnage, vol. iii. p. 549.

‡ Mosheim, vol. iv. p. 393. § Simon on Church Revenues, p. 64.

of the universal church, and that all other bishops derived their authority from them. Opposition was made to these claims, but it was ineffectual; and from the time of Lewis the Meek, European princes in general suffered themselves to be divested of all authority in religious matters.

To gain this point, many memorials, and acts of former times, were forged in this age, and especially the famous *decretal epistles*, said to have been written by the primitive bishops of Rome. They are generally fathered upon Isidore, bishop of Seville, who lived in the sixth century *.

The popes made so artful an use of the weakness of the French monarchy, that a council held at Rheims in 991, in which the authority of the pope had been disputed, is called *the last sighs of the liberties of the Gallic church*, the bishops of France after this allowing the popes a right to depose them. All the world, says M. de Marca, was obliged to submit to this new opinion, and France was at length forced to yield at the beginning of the third race of their kings. The popes laid all the bishops who had assisted at this council under an interdict and would not take it off till every thing was restored as before the council †.

But it was in the eleventh century that the great dispute arose between the popes and the emperor of Germany, about the right of *Investiture*. This consisted, originally, in the prince, or chief, putting a clergyman into the possession of any estate or fief; and was done by the delivery of a bough, or in such other manner as that in which laymen had been usually invested by the same persons. But because, upon the death of any incumbent, the priests used to deliver the *ring* and the *crozier* of the deceased bishop (by which the election of a new bishop had been used to be irrecoverably confirmed) to some person of their own choosing, before the vacancy was notified to the prince, an order was given that those ensigns of spiritual power should be transmitted to the prince immediately upon the death of any bishop, and then he delivered them to whom he pleased; after

* Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 126.

† Sueur, A. D. 991.

which the same ensigns were again solemnly delivered by the metropolitan bishop. After much contention, and much war and bloodshed upon the occasion, it was compromised, by the popes consenting that the emperor should invest by the delivery of a sceptre, and not of a ring or crozier, which were ensigns of a spiritual authority *. The principal actor in this great scene was Gregory VII. who, in a council at Lateran, decided that if any bishop received investiture from a layman, both he and the layman should be excommunicated.

In 1199 the popes pretended to have a right over all benefices, and that all translations from one see to another were the especial privilege of the see of Rome †. This right, however, was not fully asserted before it was done by Innocent III. in the thirteenth century, who assumed to himself as pope, the power of disposing of all offices in the church, whether higher or lower, and of creating bishops, abbots, and canons, at pleasure. And though the popes had formerly been strenuous advocates for the free choice of bishops against the encroachments of the emperors, this pope, and many of his successors, overturned all those laws of election; reserving to themselves the revenues of the richest benefices, conferring vacant places upon their clients and creatures, and often deposing bishops who had been duly elected, and substituting others with a high hand in their room. The bishops, however, opposed these encroachments, but generally to little purpose.

Lewis IX. of France secured the rights of the Gallican church in this respect by a famous edict, known by the name of the *Pragmatic sanction*. This, however, did not make the popes renounce their pretensions, and their legates acted with all the insolence and tyranny of their masters in the countries into which they were sent; insomuch that Alexander IV. in 1256, made a severe law against their frauds and avarice. But it was easily evaded by the credit of their friends at the court of Rome. At last Leo X. engaged Francis I. to abolish

* Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 289. † Hist. des Papes, vol. iii. p. 126.

this Pragmatic sanction, and to substitute another body of laws, more favourable to the popes, called the *Concordate*; but this was received with the greatest reluctance and indignation*.

Another part of the spiritual power claimed by the popes is that of granting dispensations to do what would otherwise be unlawful; and from merely relaxing the severity of discipline, or remitting the penances that had been enjoined for sin (which, in time, made it to be imagined that they had the power of forgiving sin itself *after the commission*) they easily passed to the idea of their having a power to forgive it, and, which was the same thing, of their making it to be no sin, *before the commission*.

It was the wants and the avarice of the popes that first led them to grant these indulgences. The popes, when they were settled at Avignon, not being able to draw so much as they had used to do from Italy, had recourse to new methods of getting wealth. They not only sold indulgences more frequently than formerly, but disposed publicly of scandalous licences, of all sorts, at an excessive price. John XXII. was particularly active in promoting this abominable traffic. He enlarged the taxes and rules of the apostolical chamber, and made them more profitable, though he was not the inventor of them.

The height to which the popes, and their advocates, carried their pretensions in this way is indeed astonishing. Innocent III. about 1198, decreed that out of the plenitude of the papal power, the pope could “of right, dispense beyond right;” and according to other decrees the popes claimed the power of dispensing even against the apostles, and the apostolical canons. Gratian, the famous canon lawyer, asserted that all men, are to be judged by the pope, but the pope himself by no man. And cardinal Zabari says that the pope may do what he pleases, even things unlawful, and that he is thereby more than God†.

There are too many instances in history of the popes

* Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 31, 32, 290.
vol. i. p. 10.

† History of Popery,

reducing these pretensions into practice by actually granting dispensations to do things morally evil, especially to release persons from the obligation of oaths. In 1042, Casimir king of Poland having retired to a monastery, deputies were sent to the pope, and he absolved him from his vows, and permitted him to resume the government of his kingdom*. Celestine II. having required Henry king of England to re-establish Dunstan in the archbishoprick of York, and he saying that he had sworn he never would do it as long as he lived, the pope answered, "I am pope, if you will do what I require, I will absolve you of that oath." The king, however, declined it†. Henry II. of England, having sworn to fulfill his father's will, obtained an absolution from the pope, and thereupon deprived his brother of his estates, and reduced him to a pension. At the council of Constance John XXIII. drew from many cardinals what he wanted to know of them by releasing them from the oath of secrecy which they had taken‡. The popes have always granted dispensations to marry within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity. Martin V. is said to have given leave to a man to marry his own sister.

Another power in spiritual matters, which has been claimed by the popes, is that of *canonization*, or the declaring what persons should be deemed *saints*, and the objects of worship. In the council of Lateran, in 1179, under Alexander III. canonization was ranked among "the greater and more important causes, the cognizance of which belonged to the Roman pontiff alone §."

Another prerogative claimed, and long exercised by the popes, and yet most clearly against all ancient custom, was that of calling and presiding in all councils; whereas originally, as I have observed, it was the business of the metropolitan of each district, and afterwards they were called by the temporal princes, first the emperor of Constantinople, and then other princes in their several states. In Germany it had always

* Fleury. † Histoire des Papes, vol. ii. p. 609. ‡ Ib. vol. iv. p. 40.
§ Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 403.

been the custom for the metropolitans to preside in their councils ; but in the year 1074 the pope claimed a right of sending his legate to preside in them *. And, in time, this claim, though the novelty of it was easily proved, came to be universally acquiesced in, and nothing but the factions of the popes themselves could ever have led the world to think or act otherwise. But after the great schism in the popedom, in which there were a long time two popes, and sometimes three, there was an absolute necessity of calling a council, and giving it a power of censuring, degrading, and making popes.

A new power now being established in the world, viz. that of the popes and the bishops, a power governed by maxims unknown to the world before, a new *system of laws* was of course introduced by it. This obtained the name of *canon law*, consisting originally of the decrees of general councils and synods, and then of the constitutions of popes, and decisions made by the court of Rome. In time these laws were collected, and reduced to a system, and became the object of study and practice to a new set of lawyers, as the Roman civil law had been before.

The first collection of ecclesiastical canons was published towards the end of the fourth century, by Stephen of Ephesus, and it was received with universal applause. The church of Rome made use of this collection till that of Dionysius Exiguus appeared, in the sixth century. These canons had no sanctions of a temporal nature, and therefore the councils generally applied to the emperors who had assembled them, to compel the observance of their decrees †.

In the seventh century, the collection of canons by Isidore of Seville was published, composed of the councils held in Greece, Africa, France, and Spain, and also of the decretal letters of the popes, to the time of Zacharias who died in 752 ‡. This being a dark and ignorant age, all the letters of the popes, for the first four centuries were forged, and yet the forgery was for many centuries undiscovered. These decretal

* Fleury. † Anecdotes, p. 105, 107. ‡ Ib. p. 293.

letters had no other object than to extend the power of the popes, and the dignity of the bishops *. The difficulty of judging bishops, Fleury says, was increased by these decretals; the power of judging them being thereby given to the popes, so that appeals to Rome became very frequent †.

Gratian, who made a collection of canons in the twelfth century, went beyond the forged decretals in two important articles, viz. the authority of the popes, and the immunities of the clergy. For he maintained that the popes are not bound by the canons, and that the clergy cannot be tried by the laity in any cases. The constitutions of the popes after this compilation of Gratian turned upon the maxims contained in it; and yet as the power of the popes increased they kicked away the scaffold, by which they had been assisted in climbing to this height of power. For Father Simon says that the decrees of Gratian are not valued at Rome, nor the books of decretals, but so far as they suit their purpose, the great principle of the court of Rome being that the pope is above all law, which was indeed the great object of Gratian ‡.

In this country the bishops were allowed to have a separate jurisdiction, according to the canon law, after the Norman conquest, and this continued till it was abridged under Henry VIII §. Indeed the canon law has never been directly abolished in England, and though a correction was proposed to be made of it, the scheme was never carried into execution. But it was provided in 1534, that till such a correction should be made all the canons that were then received should remain in force, except such as were contrary to the laws and customs of the realm, or that were to the hurt of the king's prerogative. And it is perhaps better that the canon law should remain subject to this restraint, than that any new system of the same kind should be enacted without any controul ||. These remains, however, of the canon law have been gradually going into disuse, and the whole practice of the *spiritual courts*,

* Sueur. A. D. 838.

† Seventh Discourse, p. 13.

‡ On Church Revenues, p. 88 § Hist. of Popery, vol. iii. p. 72.

|| Neal's History, vol. i. p. 11.

in which it is continued, is now held in universal abhorrence and contempt.

The pride and exterior marks of splendour assumed by the popes, have sufficiently corresponded to the power which they acquired; and the flatteries which they have received from their partizans have sometimes been in the highest degree abominable and blasphemous.

While the imperial power continued, no mark of respect was paid to the popes that was not paid to other bishops, archbishops, or patriarchs. But after they obtained sovereign power, they obtained likewise the same titles, and the same marks of reverence and respect which had been claimed by other princes; and several of these ought to have been appropriated to divinity. The title of *holiness* was often given by one bishop to another, but it was appropriated to the bishop of Rome about the year 1000*. The ceremony of the *adoration* of the pope, after his election, was borrowed from Paganism. This was always done to the Roman Pontifex Maximus, and it is done by the cardinals to the pope, seated upon the altar for that purpose. The customs of kissing the feet, and being carried on men's shoulders, were also borrowed from the Romans or the northern nations. Dioclesian ordered, by a public edict, that all persons should prostrate themselves before him, and kiss his feet; and for this purpose he had a shoe ornamented with gold and precious stones†. It was Gregory VII. who ordered in council that even princes should kiss the feet of the pope only‡. But Valentine is said to have been the first pope whose feet were kissed after consecration by the cardinals and other persons present, in 827.

The popes, to shew their superiority to other sovereigns, have assumed a *triple crown*. At first they wore only a bonnet, a little higher than usual, very much like the Phrygian mitres, which were used by the priests of Cybele; but Clovis king of France having sent to the church of St. John of Lateran a crown of gold, with which he had been presented by Anasta-

* Suet., A. D. 366. † Hist. of Popery, vol. iii. p. 340, &c.

‡ Suet., A. D. 711.

thus the emperor of Constantinople, pope Hormisdas put it on his tiara. Afterwards Boniface VIII. in his quarrels with Philip the Fair, to shew that things temporal ought to be subject to things spiritual, as a mark of this double authority used two crowns instead of one, and to them John XXII. added a third, but with what particular view is not said *.

The style that has sometimes been assumed by the popes, and made use of in addresses to some of them, without their declining it, is truly blasphemous. Martin IV. having excommunicated the people of Sicily, would not absolve them till their ambassador, being prostrate on the earth, entreated it, saying, *O lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace* †. The Fathers of the council of Lateran said to Pope Leo X. "We respect your divine majesty, "you are the husband of the church, the prince of the "apostles, the prince and king of all the universe." They entreated also that he would not let them lose the salvation and the life which he had given them. Adding, "Thou art the pastor, and the physician, thou "art a God;" and declared that he had *all power in heaven and in earth* ‡. The canonists often gave the popes the title of *Dominus Deus noster*, which, indeed, had been assumed by Domitian. Paul V. caused his picture to be affixed to several books, with this inscription, *Paulo V. vice Deo*; and Sixtus IV. suffered a triumphal arch to be erected to his honour, with this inscription:

Orâclo vocis mundi moderaris habenas,
Et merito in terris diceris esse Deus §.

A circumstance which shews the spirit of the papacy in a particular strong light, is that Gregory VII. the most ambitious of all the popes, and who contributed more than any other to increase the power and pride of the popedom, was canonized, and a particular office or form of prayer, was composed to his honour. This was introduced by Alexander VII. and was read in the churches of Rome and other parts of Europe; and

* Histoire des Papes, vol. iii. p. 425. † Hist. of Popery, vol. iii. p. 441. ‡ Basnage, vol. iii. p. 556. § Hist. of Popery, vol. i. p. 94.

whatever in his life ought to make his memory odious, is recited in this office as an heroic action. It was also authorized by Benedict XIII. But all Europe were offended at it *.

There is no giving one character of a set of men so numerous and so various as the popes have been ; but, in general, since they have become sovereign princes, they have had all the follies and vices of other sovereign princes, and have spent their revenues in the same manner ; more especially (as their power was short, and the office not hereditary) in enriching their families and dependants. At one period they were, for many successions, monsters of wickedness ; using every art, and making no scruple even of murder, to gain their ends. A man more abandoned to vice of the most atrocious kinds than Alexander VI. was perhaps never known, and Leo X. the great patron of learning, was exceedingly debauched, and probably an atheist.

It must be acknowledged, however, that many of the popes have been men who would have adorned any station in life ; being, in the worst times, patterns of virtue, and actuated by the best intentions in the world. But they never had power to reform their own courts, or to accomplish the other reformations they projected. However time, and the diminution of their power, has at length done a great deal towards it ; and as the bishops of Rome sink to the level of other bishops in the christian church, they will probably acquire the virtues of their primitive ancestors ; but then they will be no longer what we now call *popes*.

It may excite our gratitude for the blessings of the reformation, to look back upon the state of this country while it was subject to the papal power. The popes seem to have held this country in a state of greater dependance than any other in Europe. To this the obligations that William the conqueror, and others of our princes were under to them, contributed not a little. All the rights and privileges of the English clergy were, in fact, in the hands of the pope, who taxed them at his pleasure, and who had the absolute nomination

* *Histoire des Papes*, vol. ii. p. 491. vol. v. p. 597.

to all the richest benefices in the country. These were in general filled with foreigners, especially Italians, who never so much as saw their dioceses or the country, but had their revenues remitted to them abroad; by which means the country was drained of immense sums. The popes also disposed even of the reversion of the most lucrative places; so that neither the king, nor any other person in England, had any thing to dispose of in the church.

This was ill brooked by several of our Norman princes and lords; but no redress was found for this evil till the reign of that spirited prince Edward III. who passed an act called the statute of *provisors*, by which all presentations to livings within the kingdom were taken from the pope, and appointed to be in the king, or his subjects. But still the popes had considerable power, as in the trials of titles to advowsons, and appeals to the court of Rome. And though, by the seventh of Richard II. the power of nomination to benefices without the king's licence was taken from the popes, they still claimed the benefit of confirmation, of the translation of bishops, and of excommunication*.

The interference of the papal power received another check in the reign of Richard II. For whereas before that time the archbishops of Canterbury and York might, by virtue of bulls from Rome, assemble the clergy of their several provinces, at what time and place they thought fit, without leave from the crown, and all the canons and constitutions made in their synods were binding without being ratified by the king; an act passed in the sixteenth year of this reign called *premunire*, by which it was enacted, that if any of the clergy obtained any instrument from the court of Rome against the king or his crown, or if any person should receive or execute them, they should be out of the king's protection, their goods and chattels should be forfeited, and their persons imprisoned.

From this time no convocation of the clergy could be called without the king's writ, and they could consult on such matters only as he should think proper to

* Neal's History, vol. i. p. 2.

lay before them ; but still the canons were binding without the king's assent, till the act of supremacy under Henry VIII. This prince assumed the sole right to the nomination and confirmation of bishops ; and to the great mortification of the clergy, he also took to himself the first fruits of all the benefices*.

APPENDIX I.

TO

PARTS X. AND XI.

The History of COUNCILS.

TO the preceding history of the clergy in general, and of the bishops and popes in particular, it may not be amiss to add a separate account of the *councils*, or assemblies of the bishops and clergy, which make a great figure in the history of the christian church. These assumed a most undue authority, and have been one of the principal supports of the greatest corruptions of christian doctrine and discipline.

We find in the book of Acts, that when matters of considerable consequence occurred, all the apostles, or as many of them as conveniently could, assembled to consult about it, and their decrees were universally received in the christian church. It does not appear, however, that what they resolved on these occasions was directed by any immediate inspiration, for that would have superceded all reasoning and debates upon the subject, and consequently all difference of opinion. Whereas they appear to have debated among themselves, on some of these occasions, with a considerable degree of warmth. And though they conclude their advice to the Gentile christians about the observance

* Neal's History, vol. i. p. 10, &c.

of the Jewish ceremonies, with saying that *it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us*, they probably only meant, that they were fully persuaded that the regulations which they prescribed were proper in themselves, and therefore agreeable to the mind and will of God; being conscious to themselves that they were under no improper bias. If they had been conscious of any particular illumination at that time, they would probably have mentioned it. Such, however, was the respect in which the apostles were held, that even their advices had the force of decrees, and in general were implicitly conformed to.

When the apostles were dead, it was natural for the bishops of particular churches to assemble on similar occasions; and though they could not have the authority of the apostles, that office becoming extinct with those who were first appointed to it, yet as there was no higher authority in the church, had they contented themselves with merely giving *advice*, and confined their decisions to matters of discipline, they would hardly have been disputed. But it has been pretended that *general councils*, consisting of bishops assembled from all parts of the christian world, succeed to all the power of the apostles, and have even absolute authority in matters of faith. But an assembly of ever so many bishops, being only an assembly of fallible men, can have no just claim to infallibility; nor indeed was this a thing that was pretended to in early times. Our Lord did, indeed, promise that when two or three of his disciples were gathered together in his name, he would be in the midst of them; but this promise, whatever might be meant by it, was not made to bishops in particular, and might be claimed by two or three individuals, as well as by two or three hundred.

Besides those general councils, the decrees of which have been urged as of the greatest authority, were in fact assemblies of factious men; in whose proceedings there was not even the appearance of their being influenced by the love of truth. For they determined just as the emperors, or the popes who summoned them, were pleased to direct. Accordingly there are, as might be expected, many instances of the decrees of some

councils being contrary to those of others; which could not have been the case if they had been all guided by the spirit of truth.

Though Arianism was condemned by the council of Nice, it was established at the council of Arminium, which was as much a general council as the other, and also in the councils of Seleucia and Syrmium. There is also a remarkable instance of the decrees of councils, in which the popes themselves have presided, contradicting one another, in those of Chalcedon, and Constantinople, in 554. For the former absolved and justified Theodorit of Cyr, and Ibas of Edeffa, and received them into their body, as orthodox bishops; whereas the council of Constantinople, which is styled the fifth general council, and was approved by the pope, condemned them as damnable heretics*.

The council of Constantinople also decreed that images were not to be endured in christian churches; whereas the second council of Nice not only allowed them to be erected, but even to be worshipped. In later times the Lateran council of Julius II. was called for no other purpose but to rescind the decrees of the council of Pisa; and whereas the council of Basil had decreed that a council of bishops is above the popes, the Lateran council, under pope Leo, decreed that a pope is above a council.

Besides, there never has been in fact any such thing as a general council. Even the four first, which are the most boasted of, had no bishops from several whole provinces in the christian world. And the council of Trent, the authority of which the papists make so much account of, was perhaps the least respectable of all the councils. The chief intention of the crowned heads who promoted this council, was to reform the abuses in the court of Rome. But the pope himself, by his legates, presiding in it, pronounced the protestants, who appealed to it, heretics before condemned by that council, and none were allowed to vote in it, but such as had taken an oath to the pope and the church of Rome. There were hardly fifty bishops pre-

* Suetur, A. D. 524.

sent in it, none being sent from several countries. Some that were there were only titular bishops, created by the pope for that purpose; and some had Grecian titles, to make an appearance of the Greek church consenting to it. It is also well known that nothing was decided in the council without the previous consent of the court of Rome, and the decrees concluded with an express salvo of all the authority of the apostolical see.

In fact, the papists themselves have found a variety of methods of evading the force of general councils, whenever it has been convenient for them so to do; as if their decisions depended upon a matter of fact, concerning which they were never pretended to be infallible; also if their proceedings were not in all respects regular, and if their decrees were not universally received, as well as if they had not been approved by the popes. If we may judge concerning councils by the things that have been decreed in them, we shall be far from being prejudiced in their favour; their sanction having been pleaded for things the most repugnant to reason and the plainest sense of scripture, as has been sufficiently manifested in the course of this work.

Councils were most frequent in the times of the christian emperors at Constantinople, and of the christian princes of Europe, from the fall of the Roman empire till towards the end of the eighth century. But the publication of the forged decretals of Isidore at that period made a great change with respect to councils, the jurisdiction of bishops and appeals. For councils became less frequent when they could not be held without the pope's leave; and the interruption of provincial councils was a great wound, says Fleury, to ecclesiastical jurisdiction*.

The first who seems to have maintained the infallibility of councils is Barlaam, who exhorts one of his friends to return to the communion of the church of Rome, because a council at Lyons, being lawfully assembled, and having condemned the errors of the

* Seventh Discourse, p. 13.

Greeks, he must then be considered as an heretic cut off from the church, if he did not submit to it. But Occam, who lived at the same time, viz. in the fourteenth century, speaks of it as the opinion of some doctors only, while others say this infallibility was the privilege of the college of cardinals, and others of the pope himself. It was a question, however, that did not begin to be agitated till that time, and it was then disputed very calmly. It was more openly debated during the differences between the popes and the councils; when this council setting themselves up above the popes, determined that themselves, and not the popes were appointed by God to judge in the last resort concerning articles of faith. The council of Constance made no decision on this subject, but that of Basil did, saying that it was blasphemy to doubt that the Holy Spirit dictated their resolutions, decrees, and canons; while the pope and the council of Florence, declared the contrary, and it is not yet determined which of these was a lawful council*.

The most eminent of the catholic writers themselves have maintained different opinions on this subject, and have been much influenced by the circumstances in which they wrote. But this was most remarkable in the case of Æneas Sylvius, who had with great boldness maintained the authority of the council of Basil against Eugenius IV. but being made pope (by the name of Pius II.) he published a solemn recantation of all he had written upon that subject; declaring without shame or hesitation, that as Æneas Sylvius he was a damnable heretic, but as Pius II. he was an orthodox pontiff†. At present the opinion of the infallibility of the pope being generally given up by the catholics, they suppose the seat of infallibility (for it is an incontrovertible maxim with them that there must be such a seat) to be in the councils.

The protestants themselves had originally no dispute about the authority of truly general councils. Luther appealed to a general council regularly assembled, and engaged to abide by its decision‡. Calvin

* Basnage, vol. iii. p. 518. † Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 247.

‡ Ib. p. 322.

maintained in exprefs terms, that the universal church is infallible, and that God must annul his solemn promifes if it be otherwise *.

At present, however, it is not, I believe, the opinion of any protestant, that any assembly of men is infallible. But it is thought by some to be lawful and convenient to call such an assembly of divines, to determine what should be the articles of faith in particular established churches, or such as should have the countenance of particular states. The synod of Dort in Holland made decrees concerning articles of faith, and proceeded in as rigorous a manner against those who did not conform to them, as any popish synod or council could have done. The time is not yet come, though we may hope that it is approaching, when the absurdity of all interference of *power*, civil or ecclesiastical, in matters of religion shall be generally understood and acknowledged.

APPENDIX II.

TO

PARTS X. AND XI.

Of the Authority of the Secular Powers, or the Civil Magistrate, in Matters of Religion.

WE have seen the daring attempts to introduce an arbitrary authority, so as to decide concerning articles of faith, as well as concerning matters of discipline, made first by the popes, who were nothing more, originally, than bishops of the single church of Rome, and afterwards, by councils, or a number of bishops and other ecclesiastical persons. This usurpation led the

* Basnage, vol. iii. p. 499.

way to another, not indeed so excessive in the extent to which it has been carried, but much more absurd in its nature. The former usurpations were of the *clergy*, who might be supposed to have studied, and therefore to have understood, the christian system; but the latter is by mere *laymen*, who cannot be supposed to have given much attention to religion, and consequently must be very ill prepared to decide authoritatively concerning its doctrines or rites. Of this nature is the ecclesiastical authority which, upon the reformation, was transferred from the popes to the secular powers of the different states of Europe, and more especially that which was assumed by the king and parliaments of England.

The Roman emperors, when they became christians, did, indeed, interfere in the business of religion; but it was either to confirm the election of bishops (which was soon perceived to be of considerable importance to them in civil matters) or to convoke synods, or general assemblies, when, as they apprehended, the peace of the state was in danger of being disturbed by heresies, and factions in the church. But though they sometimes signed the decrees of the synods, it was never supposed that their vote was necessary to the validity of them; and though they regulated the revenues, and other things of an external nature respecting the church, they never presumed to pronounce either by their own single authority, or that of the senate in conjunction with them, what was truth or what was falsehood, what ceremonies ought to be admitted, and what ought to be rejected, as has been done by the civil governors of Europe since the reformation.

Constantine, who was himself president, or moderator in the council of Nice, speaking to the bishops on that occasion, said, as was mentioned before, "Ye are bishops of things within the church, but I am bishop as to externals." And long afterwards, when the civil and ecclesiastical powers were much more intermixed, Charlemagne, in a letter to the churches of Spain, says, concerning the council which he had held at Franckfort, "I have taken place among the bishops, both as an auditor, and arbitrator. We have seen,

“and by the grace of God we have decreed that which
 “ought firmly to be believed *.” But though this
 great prince says, *We have decreed*, it is not probable
 that he himself had so much as a proper vote in the re-
 solutions. If he had, he would hardly have called
 himself an *auditor*, or an *arbitrator*, though this seems
 to imply his having more power than that of giving a
 vote. Though it is not questioned that the emperors
 generally carried their point with the bishops, and got
 them to make what decrees they pleased, it was by their
 interest with them, and influence over them, and not
 by a proper authority. And during the prevalence of
 the papal power, the state was so far from encroach-
 ing upon the church, that ecclesiastics usurped upon
 the secular power, so as even to make and depose kings.

A series of facts relating to the ecclesiastical history
 of England, will abundantly confirm what I have here
 advanced concerning the usurpation of the rights of
 Christ, and of God, by the civil magistracy of this
 kingdom.

When Henry VIII. shook off his dependence upon
 the pope in 1531, he was far from abolishing their
 usurped and anti-christian power. He only transferred
 it from the pope to himself, claiming the title of *sole
 and supreme head of the church of England*. The ab-
 surdity of acknowledging a layman as supreme head of
 an ecclesiastical body, was a thing so new and strange,
 that the clergy would not admit it at first without this
 clause, *As far as it is agreeable to the laws of Christ*.
 But after a year or two, viz. in 1533, the *act of supre-
 macy*, as it was called, passed the parliament, and the
 convocation also, without that clause.

By this celebrated act the whole power of reforming
 heresies and errors, in doctrine and worship, was trans-
 ferred from the pope to the king, without any regard
 to the rights of synods or councils of clergy; and
 without giving any liberty to those who could not
 comply with the public standard. This act expresses
 that “the kings of this realm, and all their successors,
 “shall have full power and authority to visit, repress,

* Milet's Hist. of France, p. 62.

“ redress, reform, order, correct, restrain, and amend,
 “ all errors, heresies, abuses, contempts, and enormi-
 “ ties, whatsoever they be *.” It was also ordered
 in this reign, that all the appeals which had before
 been made to Rome, were to be made to the king’s
 chancery, to be determined as the manner now is, by
 delegates †.

This king, indeed, in his letter to the convocation
 at York, assured them that he claimed nothing more
 by the *supremacy*, than what christian princes in pri-
 mitive times assumed to themselves in their own domi-
 nions. But the contrary of this may easily be demon-
 strated. For by an act passed in the thirty-first year of
 this reign, it was enacted, that whatsoever his majesty
 should enjoin in matters of religion, should be obeyed
 by all his subjects. Such language as this was never
 held by any of the christian emperors.

The words of Mr. Hooker, who is generally allow-
 ed to be one of the ablest advocates of the church of
 England, are very express to this purpose. He says,
 “ If the whole ecclesiastical state stand in need of being
 “ visited and reformed, or when any part of the
 “ church is infested with error, schism, heresies, &c,
 “ whatsoever spiritual power the legates had from the
 “ see of Rome, and exercised in right of the pope, for
 “ remedying of evil, without violating the laws of
 “ God or nature, as much, in every degree have our
 “ laws fully granted to the king for ever, whatever
 “ he thinks fit to do by ecclesiastical synods, or other-
 “ wise according to law ‡.”

Henry VIII. Edward VI. queen Mary, queen Eliza-
 beth, and Charles I. all published instructions or in-
 junctions, concerning matters of faith, without the
 consent of the clergy, in convocation assembled, and
 enforced them upon the clergy, under the penalty of
 premunire. So jealous was queen Elizabeth of this
 branch of her prerogative, that she would not suffer
 the parliament to pass any bill for the amendment or
 alteration of any of the ceremonies of the church;
 it being, as she said, an invasion of her prerogative.

* Neal’s History, vol. i. p. 8. † Ib. p. 88. ‡ Ib. p. 86.

By one clause in the act of uniformity the queen was empowered, by the advice of her commissioners or metropolitans, to ordain and publish *farther* ceremonies and rites ; and had it not been for this clause, by which she reserved a power to make what alterations she thought fit, she told archbishop Parker, that she would not have passed the act *.

It is not easy to reconcile these claims of Henry VIII. and queen Elizabeth with that article of the church of England, which asserts that the *church has authority in controversies of faith*, if by *church* he meant the clergy. For the English clergy, as a body, were so far from having any hand in the business of reformation, that they opposed it as far as ever lay in their power. Besides, if it be granted that this absolute power is in the church, the reformation itself was unlawful, and all that Henry VIII. and our other princes have done in this business is, by their own confession, unjustifiable.

After the act of supremacy, there could be no absolute necessity for our kings to consult even the parliament upon this subject. Henry, however generally chose to do it, in order to give the stronger sanction to his own decisions. Thus the famous law of the *six articles*, commonly called the *bloody statute*, and which was entitled *An act for abolishing a diversity of opinions in certain articles concerning the christian religion*, was an act of parliament, passed in the year 1538. In this act was a ratification of several of the most important doctrines or articles of popery, and it continued in force till the end of this king's reign. In a very short time five hundred persons were imprisoned in consequence of it, among whom was the famous bishop Latimer.

This king seems even to have claimed an *infallibility* equal to that which has been arrogated by the popes, and to have acted in all respects as if he had the consciences and the faith of all his people at his absolute disposal. For in the thirty-second year of his reign, it was enacted that " All decrees and ordinances, made

* Neal's Hist. vol. i. p. 93.

“ with the king’s advice and confirmation, in and upon
 “ the matters of christian faith, and lawful rites and
 “ ceremonies, shall be, in every point thereof believed,
 “ obeyed, and performed, to all intents and purposes,
 “ upon the pains therein comprized, provided nothing
 “ be ordained contrary to the laws of the realm.”

And afterwards, when the articles of the church of England were first compiled, which was under Edward VI. in 1551, they were drawn up by Cranmer and others, and received the sanction of the royal authority in council only, without being brought to parliament or convocations, though the title expresses as much *.

In the first year of queen Elizabeth the parliament alone established the queen’s supremacy and the Common Prayer, in spite of great opposition by the bishops in the house of lords; and the convocation then sitting, was so far from having any hand in those acts of reformation, that the members of it presented to the parliament several propositions in favour of the tenets of popery, directly contrary to the proceedings of parliament.

In the life of Mr. Whiston we have a remarkable instance of the very little consequence which the *church* of England, as it is generally understood, is of, in deciding religious controversies. For when a convocation had sat upon his writings concerning the doctrine of the trinity, and pronounced them to be heretical, and dangerous, queen Ann interposed; and not chusing to ratify their sentence, all the proceedings came to nothing. Thus, as was observed on the occasion, the voice of a *woman*, which the Apostle Paul does not allow to be even heard in the church, had more weight than that of all the *churchmen* in a body. Can these things be agreeable to the constitution of the gospel? Both the clergy and the queen were interfering in a business in which they had no right to meddle; and it is sometimes pleasant to see one usurper checking the violence of another.

It is remarkable that this clause in the *articles*, by which it is ordained that the *church*, and not the *king*

* Neal’s History, vol. i. p. 52.

(who, however is acknowledged to be the supreme head of the church) should have authority in controversies of faith, was not in the first articles compiled by Cranmer, and which were forty-two in number, but was introduced into them when they were revised, and new modelled, in the reign of queen Elizabeth. But nobody can tell why or wherefore that clause came to be inserted, it being manifestly inconsistent with other acts of the legislature, and with the conduct of our princes according to those acts*.

To these remarks I shall add, that several of the most important acts of spiritual jurisdiction, relating to the revenues and discipline of the church of England, are performed by laymen. For the chancellors, officials, and surrogates, who pass censures and excommunicate, frequently are, and by express law always may be, laymen; and the bishops have no power to controul the proceedings of the courts which go by their name.

The house of Commons, which took up arms against Charles I. assumed the same authority in matters of religion that had been usurped by the preceding kings. And the presbyterians, of which sect they chiefly consisted, would have enacted some persecuting and sanguinary laws, if they had not been restrained by Oliver Cromwell, at the head of the Independents. These being the smaller number, would certainly have been suppressed by any act of uniformity; and it is not improbable, that, in consequence of being in this situation, they might sooner than any other sect in this country, hit upon the true christian principle of religious liberty, which entirely excludes the civil magistrate from interfering with it. At the restoration, the same church establishment, with the same powers in the king and in the parliament, was resumed; and everything reverted into the same channel, or nearly the same, in which they had been in the reign of queen Elizabeth.

It is something remarkable, that this glaring impropriety, of merely civil magistrates deciding concern-

* Neal's History, vol. i. p. 50.

ing articles of christian faith, which must necessarily be undertaken by all civil governors who presume to make any establishment of christianity (that is, of what they take to be christianity) in any country, should not strike more than it generally does; and that on this ground only all civil establishments of christianity should not be exploded; since all christians profess to acknowledge no Father besides God, and no Master besides Christ, and to stand fast in the liberty with which he has made us free. If there be any meaning in this, it must be that no human authority should be permitted to make that necessary to christian communion which Christ has not made necessary, but left undetermined, and consequently indifferent. There are instances, however, of this absurdity having been noticed in several periods of our history, besides that which I have mentioned, when the claim of Henry VIII. to be the supreme head of the church was first started.

When the act of uniformity was passed, in the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth, in 1559, Heath, archbishop of York, made an excellent speech against it; observing that it ought to have had the consent of the clergy in convocation, before it passed into a law. "Not only orthodox, but even Arian emperors," says he, "ordained that points of faith should be examined in councils; and Gallio, by the light of nature, knew that a civil judge ought not to meddle with matters of religion." But he was over-ruled; the act which passed that very day, having vested that power in the crown.

When that law was made, in the reign of William and Mary, which makes it blasphemy, punishable with confiscation of goods and imprisonment for life, if persisted in, to deny the doctrine of the trinity, lord Feverham, who had no objection to the doctrine which was to be guarded by that law, expressed his dislike of the civil magistrate interfering to guard it, in very strong terms. He said, that he acknowledged the houses of parliament might lay upon the subject what taxes they pleased, and might even make a king; but he did not like the idea of a *parliamentary religion*, and a *parliamentary God*. Such, however, in fact, is the estab-

lished religion of this country. It is such a religion as the king, lords, and commons of this realm have thought proper to make for themselves, and to impose upon the people; who certainly ought to judge for themselves, in a matter which so nearly concerns them as individuals, and of which they are as competent judges as their superiors. Such an usurped authority as this ought to be opposed; especially when it is considered that the power by which this mode of religion is enforced, is precisely the same with that of the popes, having been transferred from them to our princes.

Exclusive of every thing contained in the religion of the church of England, it is chiefly the *authority* by which it is enjoined that Dissenters object to in it. Things in their own nature ever so indifferent, are no longer so, when the authority by which they are enforced is improper and boundless. It is upon the same just maxim that we always profess to act in things of a civil nature. A tax of a penny is what no man would value, of itself; but it would be a justifiable cause of a civil war, if our kings only, without the concurrence of parliament, should presume to enforce that tax. Because a tax that begins with a penny might end in a pound, or extend to a man's whole property. In like manner, a power that alters a single article of faith, or imposes one rite, might change the whole system. It was, therefore, so far from being the mark of a *weak* mind, that it was an evidence of great, just, and enlarged views, in the puritans, to resist, as they did, the *imposition* of things in their own nature indifferent. To have submitted, would have been to acknowledge another supreme power in the church besides that of Christ.

This is the true and solid ground of a dissent from the church of England. It is declaring, (and it is the only proper and effectual mode of declaring) that we will acknowledge no *human authority* in matters of religion; but that we will judge for ourselves in a business which so nearly concerns us, and not suffer others to judge for us; and that in the worship of God, and what respects our happiness in a future world, we will only obey him whose power extends to that world, that is God, and not *man*.

It is, moreover, evidently agreeable to the maxims of the gospel, that every christian make an *open declaration*, both by his words and by his conduct, of what he believes concerning it. This is most expressly declared to be obligatory upon us with respect to christianity in general. And for the same reason it ought to be extended to every important distinction in the profession of christianity, and especially what relates to the *seat of power*, or authority in the church of Christ. Our Lord hath said, *If any man be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him will the son of man be ashamed, when he comes in his own glory, and the glory of his father.*

Had christianity been a system of speculative opinions only, and had not required a conformity in our practice, and such as is *visible to the world*, every degree of persecution might be avoided. But this, we know, was not the case in the primitive times. All true christians then thought themselves obliged not to make the least concealment of their opinions, whatever they might suffer in consequence of their profession. In like manner, every protestant ought to be a declared protestant, and not deny his principles by communicating with the idolatrous church of Rome. And for the very same reason every man who thinks that the church of England usurps an undue authority over the consciences of men, similar to that of the church of Rome, ought to be a *declared Dissenter*, and separate from the established church, whatever ridicule, or persecution of any kind, he may expose himself to on that account.

If the primitive christians, or the first reformers from popery, could have been contented with keeping their opinions to themselves, while they conformed to the religion of their country, they might have avoided all the inconveniences to which the public profession of their principles exposed them; and in this they would have followed the example of all heathen philosophers, whose maxim it was, *to think with the wise, and act with the vulgar*; and who ridiculed the christians for not doing the same. For all the philosophers held the popular superstitions in the same contempt with the christians themselves. But no true christian, or protestant,

will venture to sacrifice so much to their worldly ease and safety. And were not many of the present members of the church of England either grossly ignorant of the nature of religion, inattentive to what belonged to it, or governed by the heathenish maxim above-mentioned, they would not dare to countenance by their concurrence, what they may easily know to be gross corruptions of christianity, and especially an usurpation of the rights of God and of Christ.

There is another state in Europe, in which the prince assumes an ecclesiastical power independent of the pope. For the kings of Sicily pretend to be by birth *Legates a latere* to the holy see, and to have a power of absolving, punishing, and excommunicating all persons, even cardinals themselves, who reside in their kingdom. They also preside in provincial councils, and act in all respects independently of the court of Rome. Their style is *Beatissimo et santissimo padre*, and they attribute to themselves in Sicily the same power that the popes have with respect to the rest of the church. The Sicilians claim this right from a bull of Urban II. granted in 1097 to Roger the Norman king of Sicily, and to his successors. But the advocates for the court of Rome say that this bull was forged, during the long time that the island had no communication with the holy see. For it continued ninety years under an interdict, beginning in 1282. Hence, however, have arisen violent disputes between the kings of Sicily and the popes. But to this day the kings of Sicily exercise that jurisdiction, and are in fact popes within their own territories. On this account F. Simon says there are three popes in Christendom, viz. at Rome, in Sicily, and in England; the two last, however, deriving their power from the first, the kings of Sicily by voluntary concession, and the kings of England by force *.

* Simon on Church Revenues, p. 116. Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 231.

APPENDIX III.

TO

PARTS X. AND XI.

Of the Authority of Tradition, and of the Scriptures, &c.

WE have seen the pretensions of the popes, of councils, and also of civil magistrates, to decide controversies of faith. It may not be improper, in the conclusion of this subject, to consider two other authorities, viz. those of *tradition* and of the *scriptures*. As the Jewish and christian religions are of divine origin, it behoves us to examine as carefully as we can, the channels by which these divine communications have been conveyed to us; and these can be no other than *oral tradition* or *writing*; and of these the latter is certainly preferable, whenever it can be had, provided we have sufficient evidence that we have the genuine writings of the inspired prophets themselves. But in many cases even tradition ought not to be slighted.

Those christians who were not converted by the apostles themselves, and who lived before the publication of any of the canonical books of the New Testament, could not have had any other foundation for their faith. We ourselves admit these books to be canonical on no other foundation; and by calling them *canonical*, we mean no more than that they are the genuine productions of those persons whose names they bear, or of the times to which they are usually ascribed; and therefore they are of themselves of no authority, but as the most indisputable evidence of what it was that Christ and the apostles did teach and practise as from God; and it cannot be made to appear that the same thing may not be sufficiently proved by other means. We observe the first, and not the seventh day of the week, as a day of rest, contrary to the known

custom of the Jews, which we believe to have been of divine appointment, upon no other authority than that of tradition; it being supposed to have been the invariable custom of the church from the time of the apostles, and it being impossible to account for the origin of the present custom, and of its being observed without the least variation in churches that differ in almost every thing else, but upon that supposition. For we do not find in the New Testament, any express order of Christ, or of the apostles, that such a change should be made.

When, therefore, we speak of tradition as an improper foundation for faith and practice, we must mean only pretended, or ill-founded traditions; such as were alleged by several of those who were called heretics in very early times, or by the church of Rome at present. But, in this case, we object to the opinions and practices, not merely because we find no trace of them in the scriptures, but because we find no sufficient authority for them at all.

Some of the ancient heretics are said, by Austin and others, to have availed themselves of this source of credit; laying great stress on our Lord's saying to his disciples, that he had many things to say to them which they were not able to bear at the time that he was with them, and pretending that the apostles themselves, besides preaching to all persons indiscriminately, made a reserve of some things to be taught more privately, or only to a few. But there does not appear to have been any sufficient foundation for that pretence; all their teaching having been public, and nothing concealed from any persons who were desirous of being instructed. Much less was there any reason to think that the particular things which they wished to support by this pretence were among the things revealed to those few. Besides, our Lord himself seems to have precluded every pretence of this kind, by telling his apostles, that whatever they heard of him in private, they should proclaim in public. Matt. x. 26.

The church of Rome has adopted a variety of customs, and founded many claims, upon this authority

of tradition. But in what was called the *catholic church*, no recourse was had to tradition before the second council of Nice, in 787, in which the worship of images was established; when many things which had generally been assented to, and practised before that time, had no foundation in the scriptures, or in the reason of things. This council, therefore, expressly anathematized all those who did not receive ecclesiastical traditions, written or unwritten. But the things which the members of this council alleged as proper to be received on such authority, are exceedingly foolish and absurd.

The authority of the books of the New Testament, supposing them to be genuine, is the very same with that of the apostles themselves. But, in very early times, this does not appear to have been so great as it came to be afterwards. Though it was never doubted that Paul was an inspired apostle, and received the knowledge he had of the gospel from Jesus Christ himself, yet we find by his own writings that there were violent factions against him all his life, and that his opinions were by no means implicitly received. He himself is far from insisting that every thing he asserted was to be received without examination. On the contrary, the various arguments he produces in support of his assertions, without alleging any other authority for them, shews that his conclusions were drawn from the premises which he alleged, and which he submitted to the examination of his readers. He must, therefore, have supposed that they would think themselves at liberty to judge for themselves; and that, as he submitted his reasoning to their examination, they would decide for or against him, according as his arguments should appear to them conclusive or inconclusive.

When this apostle does not reason at all, but merely declares that he had his information from Christ, we receive it on the credit of a man, whom we suppose to have been neither imposed upon himself, nor to have had any interest in imposing upon others; and likewise of his being a person whose authority in general was supported by his power of working miracles. Of this

kind is the account which he gives us of the resurrection of the dead, and the change that will pass upon the living subsequent to it; and also his account of the institution of the Lord's supper, &c.

Nor was this the case of Paul only, who was peculiarly obnoxious to the Jews, on account of his zeal in preaching the gospel to the gentiles. For Peter himself, who is called the *apostle of the circumcision*, and who was considered as the very *chief of the apostles*, was not more respected, whenever he said or did any thing that was thought to be improper. This appeared very clearly in the case of Cornelius, and in the altercation that Paul had with him at Antioch.

On the former of these occasions, when the conduct of Peter was arraigned, he vindicated himself, not by asserting that what he did was by express direction from heaven (though he was led to what he did by express revelations, made both to himself, and also to Cornelius) but by a simple narrative of facts, from which they might themselves judge, that what he had done was not without sufficient authority. And even when all the apostles were met, to consider of what was to be done with respect to the supposed obligation of the gentile converts to observe the Jewish ceremonies, they seem not to have had any immediate inspiration. For they reasoned and deliberated upon the subject; which seems to imply that there was for some time a difference of opinion among them, though they afterwards concurred in giving the advice that they did, and in which they concluded that they had the concurrence of the Holy Spirit.

But even this *decree*, as it is now generally called, which had the authority, as we may say, of the whole college of apostles, does not seem to have been relished by all christians; as we may infer from the enmity which the Jewish converts in general bore to Paul, and from the Nazarenes, or Jewish christians, never making use of his writings. For though they were not written in a language which they understood, it would not have been more difficult to procure a translation of them, than of the gospel of Matthew, which was also probably written in Greek.

Indeed, what is universally acknowledged to have

been the state of the Jewish christians could not have been true, if they had had the same ideas that were afterwards entertained, of the constant inspiration of the apostles and evangelists. A great part of them rejected the account of our Lord's miraculous conception, and though they made use of the gospel of Matthew in Hebrew, they omitted the two first chapters, in which it is asserted; not, as far as appears, questioning their being written by Matthew, but not thinking the contents of them sufficiently well founded; and yet they did not, on account of this difference of opinion, cease to communicate with one another. Nor does Justin Martyr, who mentions their opinion long afterwards, pass any censure upon them on account of it. He only says, that he cannot think as they did; and what is more remarkable, he does not mention the authority of Matthew and Luke, as what was decisive against them. These Jewish christians would certainly have treated the gospel of Luke in the same manner as they did that of Matthew, if they had been acquainted with it, and had thought proper to make use of it at all.

When the Jewish church was first formed, and indeed so late as the publication of the gospel, many of the disciples would think themselves as good judges of the history of Christ, as the evangelists themselves. They did not want those books for their own use, and would judge concerning the contents of them, as they would concerning other books which implied an appeal to living witnesses. That the books were generally received, and not immediately rejected, by those to whom they were addressed, is a proof that the history which they contained is in the main authentic, but by no means proves that every minute circumstance in them is true. Indeed the evangelists, varying from one another in many particulars (which may be seen in the dissertations prefixed to my *Harmony of the Gospels*) proves that they wrote partly from their recollection, which might be imperfect in things of little consequence, and partly from the best information which they could collect from other persons.

Like other credible historians, all the evangelists agree in the main things, but they differ exceedingly

in the order of their narrative, and with respect to incidents of little consequence; and to contend for any thing more than this is in effect to injure their credibility. If the agreement among them had been as exact as some pretend, it would have been natural for the enemies of christianity to have said, that they must have been written by combination, and therefore that the history has not the concurrent testimony of independent witnesses; and if the exactness contended for cannot be proved, the authority of the whole must be given up.

Besides, what would have been the use of appointing twelve apostles, or witnesses of the life and resurrection of Christ, if their testimony was not naturally sufficient to establish the credibility of the facts; and what would have signified even the original inspiration, unless all error in transcribing, and translating, &c. had been prevented by the same miraculous interposition, in all ages, and in all nations afterwards. Having written more largely upon this subject in my *Institutes of Natural and revealed Religion*, and also in the preface to my *Harmony of the Gospels*, to those works I beg leave to refer any readers with respect to this subject. I would also refer them to what I have written under the signature of *Paulinus*, in the *Theological Repository*, in which I think I have shewn, that the apostle Paul often reasons inconclusively, and therefore that he wrote as any other person of his turn of mind and thinking, and in his situation, would have written, without any particular inspiration. Facts, such as I think I have there alleged, are stubborn things, and all hypotheses must be accommodated to them.

Not only the Nazarenes, but christians of other denominations also, rejected several of the books of our New Testament, and without denying the authenticity of them (for with this they are not, in general, charged) but because they did not approve of their contents. Thus the Gnostics in general made but little use of the canonical books, and pleaded the authority of tradition, and the Helcesaites, in the time of the emperor Philip, are said to have rejected all the epistles of Paul, though the authenticity of them was never questioned.

When the apostles were dead, the authority of their writings would naturally rise, and appeals would be made to them when controversies arose in the church. And this natural and universal deference to the opinion of the apostles, produced, I doubt not, at length, the opinion of their infallibility. Their authority was also justly opposed to the many idle traditions that were pretended to by some of the early heretics, and to the spurious gospels that were written after the *four* had acquired credit. Till that time there could be no inducement to write others, and notwithstanding the reception that some of the forged gospels met with in certain places, they never operated to the discredit of the four genuine ones (and indeed they were only written as supplemental to them) it appears that they were easily distinguished from the genuine gospels, and did not retain any credit long. And what we are able to collect of them at this day is enough to satisfy us, that they were not rejected without sufficient reason.

The Jews, in forming their canon of sacred books, seem in general to have made it a rule to comprize within their code all books written by prophets; and therefore, though they had other books, which they valued, and might think very useful in the conduct of life, they never read them in their synagogues. These books were afterwards called *apochryphal*, consisting of pieces of very different character, partly historical, and partly moral.

These apocryphal books were not much used by christians, till they were found to favor some superstitious opinions and practices, the rise of which I have already traced, and especially the worship of saints. For at the council of Laodicea, in 364, the Hebrew canon was adopted. But in the third council of Carthage, in 397, the apocryphal books were admitted, as canonical and divine, and were therefore allowed to be read in public, especially Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom, Tobit, Judith, and the two books of Maccabees. The popes Innocent, Gelasius, and Hormisdas confirmed the decrees of this council*.

* Suet., A. D. 397. Bafnage, vol. iii. p. 460.

The church having afterwards adopted the version of Jerom, which followed the Hebrew canon, the apocryphal books began to lose the authority which they had acquired; and it was never fully re-established, till the council of Florence in 1442; and it was then done principally to give credit to the doctrine of purgatory. It was for a similar reason that the council of Trent made a decree to the same purpose*. Also, though before the second council of Nice the scriptures alone were considered as the standard of faith, it was then decreed, for the first time, that they who despised traditions should be excommunicated†.

Notwithstanding the apparently little foundation which many of the popish doctrines have in the scriptures, it was very late before any measures were taken to prevent the common people from using them. Indeed, in the dark ages, there was no occasion for any such precaution, few persons, even among the great and the best educated, being able to read at all. The Slavonians, who were converted to christianity at the end of the ninth century, petitioned to have the service in their own language, and it was granted to them. Pope John VIII. to whom the request was made, thanked God that the Slavonian character had been invented, because God would be praised in that language. He ordered, however, that the gospels should be read in Latin, but that afterwards they should be interpreted to the people, that they might understand them, as was done, he says, in some churches‡.

But afterwards, Wratisslas king of Bohemia applying to Gregory VII. for leave to celebrate divine service in the same Slavonian tongue, it was absolutely refused. For, said this pope, after considering of it, "it appeared that God chose that the scripture should be obscure in some places, lest if it was clear to all the world, it should be despised; and also lead people in to errors, being ill understood by their ignorance." This, says Fleury, was the beginning of such prohibitions§.

* Ib. p. 463. 465.

† Basnage, vol. iii. p. 471.

‡ Ib. p. 488.

§ A. D. 1080.

The practice of the church of Rome at present is very various. In Portugal, Spain, Italy, and in general in all those countries in which the inquisition is established, the reading of the scriptures is forbidden. France was divided on this subject, the Jansenists allowing it, and the Jesuits refusing it. For the council of Trent having declared the vulgate version of the Bible to be authentic, the Jesuits maintained that this was meant to be a prohibition of any other version*.

After the council of Trent this evil was much increased. For the bishops assembled at Bologna, by order of Julius III. advised that the reading of the scriptures should be permitted as little as possible, because the power of the popes had always been the greatest when they were the least read; alleging that it was the scriptures which had raised the dreadful tempest with which the church was almost sunk, and that no person ought to be permitted to know more of them than is contained in the mass. His successor profited by this advice, and put the bible into the catalogue of *prohibited books* †.

The cardinal Cusa, in order to justify the condemnation of Wickliffe, in the council of Constance, said that the scriptures must be explained according to the present doctrine of the church; and that when the institutions of the church change, the explication of the scripture should change also; and the council of Trent has decided that traditions ought to be received with the same respect as the scriptures, because they have the same authority ‡.

So much were the Roman catholics chagrined at the advantage which Luther, and the other reformers, derived from the scriptures, that, on some occasions they spoke of them with so much indignation and disrespect, as is inconsistent with the belief of their authority, and of christianity itself. Prieras, master of the sacred palace, writing against Luther advances these two propositions, viz. that the scriptures derive all their authority from the church and the pope, and that indulgences, being established by the church and the pope,

* Basnage, vol. iii. p. 468. † Ib. 475. ‡ Ib. 489.

have a greater authority than the scriptures. "How
 "do we know," say some of these writers, "that the
 "books which bear the name of Moses are his, since
 "we have not the originals, and if we had them, there
 "is no person who knows the hand-writing of Moses?
 "Besides, how do we know that all that Moses has said
 "is true? Were the evangelists witnesses of all that
 "they write? And if they were, might not they be de-
 "fective in memory, or even impose upon us? Every
 "man is capable of deceiving, and of being deceiv-
 "ed *."

All the popes, however, have not shewn the same
 dread of the scriptures. For Sixtus V. caused an Ital-
 ian translation of the bible to be published, though the
 zealous catholics were much offended at it †.

So much were the minds of all men oppressed with
 a reverence for antiquity, and the traditions of the
 church, at the time of the reformation, that the pro-
 testants were not a little embarrassed by it in their
 controversy with the catholics; many of the errors and
 abuses of popery being discovered in the earliest chris-
 tian writers, after the apostolical age. But at present
 all protestants seem to entertain a just opinion of such
 authority, and to think with Chillingworth, that *the
 bible alone is the religion of protestants*. We may, how-
 ever, be very much embarrassed by entertaining even
 this opinion in its greatest rigour, as I have shewn in
 the introduction to this Appendix.

* Basnage, vol. iii. p. 455, &c. † Hist. des Papes, vol. v. p. 80.

THE
HISTORY
OF THE
Corruptions of Christianity.

PART XII.

The History of the MONASTIC LIFE.

THE INTRODUCTION.

BESIDES those ministers of the christian church whose titles we meet with in the New Testament, but whose powers and prerogatives have been prodigiously increased from that time to the present, we find that excepting the *popes* alone, no less conspicuous a figure was made by other orders of men, of whom there is not so much as the least mention in the books of scripture, or the writings of the apostolical age. I mean the *monks*, and *religious orders* of a similar constitution, which have more or less of a religious character.

The set of opinions which laid the foundation for the whole business of monkery, came originally from the East, and had been adopted by some of the Greek philosophers, especially Plato, viz. that the soul of man is a spiritual substance, and that its powers are clogged, and its virtues impeded, by its connection with the body. Hence they inferred that the greatest perfection of mind is attained by the extenuation and mortification of its corporeal incumbrance. This notion operating with the indolent and melancholy turn of many persons in the southern hot climates of Asia, and especially of Egypt, led them to affect an austere solitary life, as destitute as possible of every thing that might pamper the body, or that is adapted to gratify

those appetites and passions which were supposed to have their seat in the flesh. Hence arose the notion of the greater purity and excellency of celibacy, as well as a fondness for a retired and unsocial life, which has driven so many persons in all ages from the society of their brethren, to live either in absolute solitude, or with persons of the same gloomy turn with themselves. It is the same principle that made Essenes among the Jews, Monks among Christians, Dervises among Mahometans, and Fakirs among Hindoos.

How apt christians were to be struck with the example of the heathens in this respect, we see in Jerom, who takes notice that paganism had many observances which, to the reproach even of christians, implied a great strictness of manner and discipline. "Juno," says he, "has her priestesses, devoted to one husband, Vesta her perpetual virgins, and other idols their priests also under vows of chastity *."

The persecution of christians by the heathen emperors, and consequently the more imminent hazard that attended living in cities, especially with the incumbrance of families, was another circumstance that contributed to drive many of the primitive christians into deserts and unfrequented places. The irruptions of the northern nations into the Roman empire had an effect of the same kind, making all cities less safe and comfortable. Moreover, when the great persecutions were over, and consequently the boasted *crown of martyrdom* could not be obtained in a regular way, many persons inflicted upon themselves a kind of voluntary martyrdom, in abandoning the world and all the enjoyments of life. Gregory Nazianzen, celebrating the austerity of the monks of his country, says that some of them, through an excess of zeal, killed themselves, in order to be released from a wicked world †. It is possible, however, that they might not directly kill themselves, or intend to do it, but only died in consequence of depriving themselves of the usual comforts of life. It was these austerities, joined with such imaginary *revelations*, and intimate communications with

* Middleton's Letters, p. 238. † Jortin's Remarks, vol. iii. p. 22.

heaven, as have usually accompanied them, that was the great recommendation of Montanism. The Montanists, Tertullian says, had the same rule of faith, but more fasting and less marrying, than others *.

These notions, and these circumstances concurring, particular texts of scripture were easily found that seemed to countenance austerities in general, and celibacy in particular; as that saying of our Saviour, Matt. xix. 12. *There are some who make themselves Eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that can receive it, let him receive it*; and Paul's saying, 1 Cor. vii. 38. *He that giveth in marriage does well, but he that giveth not in marriage doth better*. Both these passages, however, probably relate to the times of persecution, in which it is either absolutely necessary to abandon the satisfaction of family relations, and domestic society, or at least in which it is most convenient to be free from every attachment of that kind; that when men were persecuted in one city, they might, with more ease, and less distress of mind, flee to another.

But on every other occasion marriage is spoken of in the most honourable terms in the scriptures, and is, indeed, necessary for the propagation of the human species. Besides, Paul makes it a mark of that *man of sin*, or *antichristian power*, which was to arise in the latter times, that it was to *forbid to marry*, as well as to make use of *meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving*. 2 Tim. iv. 3. In fact, these two circumstances greatly contribute to point out the church of Rome as the principal seat of that antichristian corruption, of which so much is said, and against which we are so earnestly cautioned in the books of the New Testament.

Besides, mens passions are far from being improved by the long continuance of this miserable and solitary state. Instead of approaching by this means, as they vainly pretended, to the life of angels, they rather sink themselves to the condition of brutes, and some of the most worthless or savage kinds. Also, living without labour themselves (as in time the monks came

* De Jejuniiis, Cap. i. Opera, p. 544.

to do) and upon the labour of others, and without adding to the number or strength of the community, they certainly defeat the great purposes of their creation, as social beings; and are not only a dead weight upon the community, but in many cases, a real evil and nuisance in those states in which they are established.

SECTION I.

Of the Monastic Life till the Fall of the Western Empire.

THERE is always something uncertain and fabulous in the antiquities of all societies, and it is so in those of the monks. The monks themselves acknowledge the first of their order to have been one *Paul*, an Egyptian, who in the seventh persecution, or about the year 260, retired into a private cave, where he is said to have lived many years, unseen by any person, till one Anthony found him just before his death, put him into his grave, and followed his example.

This Anthony, finding many others disposed to adopt the same mode of life, reduced them into some kind of order; and the regulations which he made for the monks of Egypt were soon introduced into Palestine and Syria by his disciple Hilarion, into Mesopotamia by Aones and Eugenius, and into Armenia by Eustachius bishop of Sebastia. From the East this gloomy institution passed into the West; Basil carrying it into Greece, and Ambrose into Italy. St. Martin, the celebrated bishop of Tours, first planted it in Gaul, and his funeral is said to have been attended by no less than two thousand monks. But the western monks never attained to the severity of the eastern*.

The number of these monks in very early times was so great, as almost to exceed belief. Fleury says, that

* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 307.

in Egypt alone they were computed, at the end of the fourth century, to exceed seventy thousand *. With this increasing number many disorders were necessarily introduced among them. At the end of the fourth century the monks were observed to be very insolent and licentious; and having power with the people, they would sometimes even force criminals from the hands of justice, as they were going to execution †. In the time of Austin many real or pretended monks went strolling about, as hawkers and pedlars, selling bones and relics of martyrs.

The increase of monks was much favoured by the laws of christian princes, and the encouragement of the popes, as well as by the strong recommendation of the most distinguished writers of those times. Justinian made a law that a son should not be disinherited for becoming a monk contrary to his father's will; and Jovian appointed that whoever courted a nun, and enticed her to marry, should be put to death. But this law, being thought too severe, was afterwards mitigated ‡. Syricius, bishop of Rome, ordered that monks and virgins who married after their consecration to God should be banished from their monasteries, and confined in private cells; that by their continual tears they might efface their crime, and become worthy of communion before they died. The same pope ordered that bishops and priests who were married, and had any commerce with their wives, should be degraded from their office §.

The language in which the writers of those times recommended a monkish life was sometimes shocking and blasphemous, especially that of Jerom, who was the greatest advocate for it in his time. Writing to Eustochium the nun, he calls her *his lady*, because she was the *spouse of Christ*; and he reminds her mother, that she had the honour to be *God's mother in law* ||.

Many women were ambitious of distinguishing themselves by some of the peculiarities of the monkish life

* Eighth Discourse, p. 8. † Sueur, A. D. 399.

‡ Jortin's Remarks, vol. iv. p. 27. 38. § Sueur, A. D. 385.

|| Ad Eustochium Ep. 22. Opera, vol. i. p. 140, 144.

in these early times, devoting themselves, as they imagined, to God, and living in virginity, but at first without forming themselves into regular communities. Jerom prevailed upon many women in Rome to embrace this kind of life; but they continued in their own houses, from which they even made visits; and it appears by an epitaph which he wrote for Marulla, that before her there was no woman of condition in Rome who lived in this manner; the common people of that city considering it as disreputable, on account of the novelty of the thing*. These early nuns were only distinguished by wearing a veil, that was given them by the bishop of the place. It was not till the year 567 that queen Radigonda founded the first monastery for women in France, which was confirmed by the council of Tours†.

No perfect uniformity can be expected in the customs and modes of living among men, and least of all men whose imaginations were so eccentric as those of the monks. Accordingly we find almost endless distinctions among them; some chusing to live in one manner, and some in another. And in later times when they formed themselves into regular societies, and laid themselves under an absolute engagement to live according to certain rules, we find above a hundred kinds of men who assumed different names generally from their respective founders. But these divisions and subdivisions were the offspring of late ages.

The most early distinction among them was only that of those who lived quite single and independent, and those who lived in companies. The latter were called *Cænobites* in Greek, in Latin *Monks* (though that term originally denoted an absolutely solitary life) and sometimes *friars* from *fratres*, *freres*, *brethren*, on account of their living together as brothers in one family. These had a president called *abbot*, or *father*, and the place where they lived was called a *monastery*.

On the other hand, those who lived single were often called *eremites* or *hermits*, and commonly frequented caves and desarts. And some make a farther distinction

* Sueton. A. D. 382.

† Ibid. 567.

of these into *Anachorites*, whose manner of life was still more savage, living without tents or cloathing, and only upon roots or other spontaneous productions of the earth. In Egypt some were called *Sarabites*. These led a wandering life, and maintained themselves chiefly by selling relics, and very often by various kinds of fraud *.

In early times it was not uncommon for persons to pass from one of these modes of life to the other; and in later ages it was sometimes found to be very advantageous to the revenues of the society, for the monks to become hermits for a time, retiring from the monastery with the leave of the abbot. These being much revered by the people, often got rich by their alms, and then deposited their treasures in their monasteries †.

Persons who live in protestant countries, or indeed in Roman catholic countries at present, can form no idea of the high respect and reverence with which monks were treated in early times. They were universally considered as beings of a higher rank and order than the rest of mankind, and even superior to the priests; and wherever they went, or could be found, the people crowded to them, loading them with alms, and begging an interest in their prayers. In this light, however, they were regarded in general. For some persons may be found who thought sensibly in every age, and consequently looked with contempt upon this spurious kind of religion, and affectation of extraordinary sanctity.

In the fourth century, when all christian countries swarmed with monks, we find one who, though he chose that mode of life, was sensible of the superstitious notions that were very prevalent with respect to it, and strenuously remonstrated against them. This was Jovinian, who towards the conclusion of that century taught, first at Rome, and afterwards at Milan, that all who lived according to the gospel have an equal right to the rewards of heaven; and consequently that they who passed their days in unsocial celibacy and severe mortifications, were in no respect more accepta-

* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 309. † Simon on Church Revenues, p. 55.

ble in the sight of God than those who lived virtuously in the state of marriage. But these sensible opinions were condemned, first by the church of Rome, and afterwards by Ambrose bishop of Milan, in a council held in the year 390. The emperor Honorius seconded the proceedings of the council, and banished Jovinian as an heretic. The famous Jerom, also, wrote in a very abusive manner against the treatise of Jovinian, in which he maintained the above-mentioned opinions.

SECTION II.

The History of the Monks after the Fall of the Western Empire.

HAVING given the preceding account of the origin and nature of the monkish establishments, I proceed, in launching out into the dark ages, to point out the steps by which these monks attained that amazing power and influence which they acquired in the later ages, and to note other remarkable facts in their history, shewing both the good and the evil that arose from their institution.

The primitive monks, courting solitude, were equally abstracted from the affairs of the world, and those of the church; and yet, by degrees, a very considerable part of the business in both departments came to be done by them. The principal circumstance that favoured their advancement, and made their introduction into public life in a manner necessary, was the great ignorance of the *secular* clergy. For by this term the common clergy began to be distinguished, on account of their living more after the manner of the world; while the monks, on account of their living according to an exact *rule*, got the name of *regulars*, and *religious*. The monks spending a great part of their time in contemplation, many of them were induced to give some attention to letters, and soon obtained a manifest

superiority over the clergy in that respect; and the christian church was never without great occasion for learned men.

Several heresies, in particular, springing up in the church, and some learned monks very ably opposing them, it was found convenient to draw them from their solitude, and to settle them in the suburbs of cities, and sometimes in the cities themselves, that they might be useful to the people. In consequence of this, many of them, applying to study, got into holy orders. This was much complained of for some time; but being found useful to the bishops themselves, both in spiritual and temporal affairs, those bishops who were fond of a numerous clergy, and wanted fit men to carry on their schemes, gave them considerable offices; not imagining that they were encouraging a set of men, who would afterwards supplant them in their dignities and revenues*.

Originally the monks being subject to the bishops, could do nothing without their consent. They could not even chuse their own abbots. But the election of an abbot being sometimes appointed by their *institutions* to be made by the monks of the community, they first obtained from the bishops the power of chusing their abbot according to the tenor of their constitutions. Afterwards they sometimes got from the bishops exemptions from episcopal jurisdiction. But when the popes got the power of granting such exemptions, they commonly gave, or sold, to the monks as many of them as they pleased, so that their power grew with that of the popes†.

In the seventh century pope Zacharias granted to the monastery of mount Cassin an exemption from all episcopal jurisdiction, so that it was subject to the pope only. Similar exemptions had been obtained in the preceding century, but they were very rare. In time they came to be universal, and were even extended to the chapters of regular cathedrals. In return for those privileges, the monks were distinguished by a boundless devotion to the see of Rome. These abuses were

*Simon on Church Revenues, p. 35. † Ib. p. 65.

checked, but not effectually, by the councils of Constance and Trent *.

The first introduction of monks into holy orders, was by the permission which they obtained to have priests of their own body, for the purpose of officiating in their monasteries, to which there could be no great objection; it being for the convenience of the secular priests, themselves, as well as of the monastery; and especially as, with respect to qualification for the office, they were superior to the priests themselves. The first privilege they obtained of this kind was from Boniface III. but their ecclesiastical power was completed, and made equal to that of the other clergy, by Boniface IV. in 606. They could then preach, baptize, hear confessions, absolve, and do every thing that any priest could do. Upon this the monks began to be, in a great measure, independent of the bishops, refusing to submit to their orders, on the pretence that they were contrary to their rules of discipline, and always appealing to the popes, who were sure to decide in their favour.

The monks, besides theology, studied likewise the canon and civil laws, and also medicine; studies which they began through charity, but which they continued for interest. They were therefore forbidden by Innocent II. in 1131, to study either civil law or medicine. But in the beginning of the following century they were allowed to be advocates for the regulars. These things, says Fleury, brought them too much into the world †.

The clergy were soon aware of the encroachments of the monks, both upon their spiritual power, and upon their revenues. But the tide of popularity was so strongly in their favour, that all attempts to withstand it were in vain. At the council of Chalcedon it was ordered that the monks should be wholly under the jurisdiction of the bishops, and meddle with no affairs, civil or ecclesiastical, without their permission. But this, and all other regulations for the same purpose, availed nothing, both the popes and the rich laity, fa-

* Anecdotes, p. 298. 303.

† Eighth Discourse, p. 176

vowing the monks. When Gregory VII. made a law to compel laymen, to restore whatever had been in the possession of the church, such restitutions were generally made either to the cathedral churches, where the clergy conformed to a regular monastic life or to the monasteries, and seldom to those parish churches to which the estates had originally belonged *.

In later times the endowments of monasteries were equal, if not superior, to those of the churches; and the influence of the monks with the popes and the temporal princes being generally superior to that of the clergy, they used, in many places, to claim the *tithes*, and other church dues. When churches depended upon monasteries, they appointed monks to officiate in them, and appropriated the tithes to the use of the monastery. Also bishops were often gained by the monks to suffer them to put vicars or curates into churches, which they pretended to depend upon monasteries †; and in other respects also, they encroached upon the rights of the clergy.

The monks having taken advantage of the ignorance of the secular priests, and having got the government of many churches committed to them, it was not easy to turn them out, and re-establish the secular clergy in their places; and on this account there happened the greatest contests between the canons and the monks, especially in England; where the monks had deprived the canons of their canonships, and even obliged the secular priests to turn monks, if they would enjoy their benefices. All the archbishops of Canterbury had been monks from the time of that Austin whom Gregory sent into England, to the reign of Henry I. But, at length, all the bishops in England declared that they would have no monk for their primate; and by degrees they began to take the government of the church into their own hands ‡.

In the ninth century many monks were taken from the monasteries, and even placed at the head of armies; and monks and abbots frequently discharged the functions of ambassadors, and ministers of state. For upon

* Simon on Church Revenues, p. 67. † Ib. ‡ Ib. p. 74.

the very same account that the clergy in general were better qualified for these offices than laymen, viz. in point of learning and address, the regular clergy had the advantage of the secular.

The monks, and especially the mendicant orders, assumed so much, and got so much power both spiritual and temporal into their hands, some time before the reformation, that all the bishops, clergy, and universities in Europe were engaged in a violent opposition to them. And it was in this quarrel that the famous Wickliffe, first distinguished himself, in 1360; and from thence he proceeded to attack the pontifical power itself.

Before the sixth century there was no distinction of orders among monks, but a monk in one place was received as a monk in any other. But afterwards they subdivided themselves into societies, altogether distinct from one another; and so far were they from considering all monks as friends and brothers, that they often entertained the most violent enmity against each other; especially those who formed themselves on the same general plan, and afterwards divided from them on some trifling difference in customs or habits.

This distinction of orders began with Benedict of Nursia, who in 529 instituted a new order of monks, which presently made a most rapid progress in the West; being particularly favoured by the church of Rome, to the interest of which it was greatly devoted. In the ninth century this order had swallowed up all the other denominations of monks*.

Notwithstanding the extreme profligacy of the manners of many of these monks, their number and reputation would hardly be credible, but that the most authentic history bears testimony to it. What the number of them was in Egypt, at a very early period, has been mentioned already. Presently afterwards, viz. in the fifth century, the monks are said to have been so numerous, that large armies might have been raised out of them, without any sensible diminution of their body. And yet this was not to be compared to their numbers.

* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 449.

in later ages; and almost every century produced new species of them, and no age abounded more with them than that which immediately preceded the reformation*.

In the seventh century the heads of rich families were fond of devoting their children to this mode of life, and those who had lived profligate lives generally made this their last refuge, and then left their estates to the monasteries. This was deemed sufficient to cancel all sorts of crimes, and therefore the embracing of this way of life was generally termed a *second baptism*.

In the eighth and ninth centuries, counts, dukes, and even kings, abandoned their honours, and shut themselves up in monasteries, under the notion of devoting themselves entirely to God. Several examples of this fanatical extravagance were exhibited in Italy, France, Germany, Spain, and England. And others, repenting that they had not done this in time, put on the monastic habit on the approach of death, and chose to be buried in it, that they might be considered as of the fraternity, and consequently have the benefit of the prayers of that order.

This most abject superstition continued to the fifteenth century. For even then we find many persons made it an essential part of their last wills, that their bodies should be wrapped in old Dominican or Franciscan habits, and be interred among the monks of those orders†.

It is said that in all the centuries of christianity together, there were not so many foundations of monasteries, both for men and women, or so rich and famous, as those of the seventh and eighth centuries, especially in France‡. And when monasteries were so much increased, we are not surprized to find complaints of the want of good discipline among them. Accordingly, in the ninth century, the morals of the monks were so bad, that some reformation was absolutely necessary; and this was attempted by Benedict, abbot of Aniane, at the instance of Louis the Meek. He

* Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 446, &c. † lb. p. 164.

‡ Suet. A. D. 720.

first reformed the monasteries of Aquitaine, and then those of all France, reducing all the monks, without exception, to the rule of the famous Benedict of Mount Cassin. This discipline continued in force a certain time, but the effect of it was extinct in less than a century. The same emperor also favoured the order of Canons, distributing them through all the provinces of his empire. He also instituted an order of *Canoneſſes*, which Mosheim says was the first female convent in the christian world *.

In the tenth century the monkish discipline, which had been greatly decayed, was again revived in some measure by the authority of Odo bishop of Clugny, whose rules were adopted by all the western kingdoms in Christendom. Thus we find successive periods of reformation in the discipline of monasteries. But no sooner were the new and more austere kinds of monks established, and got rich, than they became as dissolute as their predecessors, which called for another revolution in their affairs; and these successive periods of rigour and dissoluteness continued quite down to the reformation.

One of the first great causes of this relaxation of discipline in the monasteries, was the invasion of the Normans, whose ravages fell chiefly upon the monasteries. For upon this, the monks being dispersed, and assembling where and how they could, the observance of their rules was impossible, and many irregularities were introduced. Something of the same kind was the consequence of the great plague in Europe, in 1348, when many of the monks died, and the remainder dispersed; and having lived for some time without any regard to their rules, they could not without difficulty be brought to them again.

A more general cause of the relaxation of discipline among all the orders of the monks, as Bernard observed, was their exemption from episcopal jurisdiction †.

Another cause of the relaxation of their discipline, was the multiplication of prayers and singing of psalms; for they had added many to those prescribed by Bene-

* Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 128, 130. † Fleury's Eighth Discourse, p. 37.

dict. This, says Fleury, left them no time for labour, of which Benedict had ordered seven hours every day. This contempt of bodily labour was introduced by the northern nations, who were addicted to hunting and war, but despised agriculture and the arts *. Mental prayer, he adds, has been much boasted of by the monks for the last five hundred years. It is, says he, an idle and equivocal exercise, and produced at length the error of the Beghards and Beguines, which was condemned at the councils of Vienna †. The original monks, he says, were a very different kind of men, and their discipline much more proper to produce a real mortification to the world, and to suppress inordinate affections. Theirs was a life of contemplation and labour, by which they chiefly supported themselves. The ancient monks had no hair cloths, or chains, and there was no mention of discipline or flagellation among them ‡.

Bodily labour, this writer observes, was likewise excluded by the introduction of *lay brothers* into monasteries, and this was another means of the corruption of their manners, the monks being the masters, and the lay brothers being considered as slaves, and an order of persons much below them, and subservient to them. John Gualbert was the first who instituted lay brothers, in his monastery of Valombrose, founded about 1040. To those lay brothers were prescribed a certain number of *pater nosters*, at each of their canonical hours; and that they might acquit themselves of this duty without any omission or mistake, they carried grains of corn, or strings, whence came the use of *chaplets*. The same distinction, he says, was afterwards carried into nunneries, though there was no pretence for it §.

The monastic orders being almost all wealthy and dissolute in the thirteenth century, the *mendicant* or *begging friars*, who absolutely disclaimed all property, were then established by Innocent III. and patronized by succeeding pontiffs. These increased so amazingly,

* Fleury's Eighth Discourse, p. 13. † Ib. p. 44, 45. ‡ Ib. p. 6.
§ Ib. p. 35.

that they became a burthen both to the people and to the church itself; and at length they were the occasion of much greater disorders than those which they were introduced to redress.

There is a remarkable resemblance, as Middleton observes, between these mendicant friars and the mendicant priests among the pagans. The mendicant priests among the heathens, he says, who used to travel from house to house with sacks on their backs, and from an opinion of their sanctity raised contributions of money, &c. for the support of their *fraternities*, were the pictures of the begging friars, who are always about the streets in the same habits, and on the same errands, and never fail to carry home with them a good sack full of provisions for the use of their convent*.

Notwithstanding these disorders, it must be acknowledged that the mendicant friars were instituted with the very best intention, and that they had for a considerable time a very good effect. St. Francis, the founder of this order, thought his institute, by which he forbid his monks the use of gold, silver, or any kind of property, the pure gospel; and it was of use, as Fleury observes, in a very corrupt age to recall the idea of charity and simple christianity, and to supply the defect of ordinary pastors; the greater part of whom were then ignorant or negligent, and many corrupt and scandalous†.

The monks of the ancient religious orders fell into great contempt after the introduction of the Mendicants, who filled the chairs in schools and churches, and by their labours supplied the negligence and incapacity of the priests and other pastors. But this contempt excited the emulation of the other orders, and made them apply to matters of literature‡.

Afterwards the mendicant friars, on the pretence of *charity*, meddled with all affairs, public and private. They undertook the execution of wills, and they even accepted of deputations to negotiate peace between cities and princes. The popes frequently em-

* Middleton's Letters, p. 220.

† Ib. p. 32.

‡ Eighth Discourse, p. 21.

§ Ib. p. 27.

ployed them, as persons intirely devoted to them, and who travelled at a small expence; and sometimes they made use of them in raising money. But what diverted them the most from their proper profession was the business of the *inquisition*. By undertaking to manage this court, they were transformed into magistrates, with guards and treasures at their disposal, and became terrible to every body *.

During three centuries the two fraternities of mendicants, the Dominicans and the Franciscans, governed with an almost universal and absolute sway both church and state, and maintained the prerogative of the Roman pontiff, against kings, bishops, and heretics, with incredible ardor and success. They were in those times what the Jesuits were afterwards, the life and soul of the whole hierarchy. Among other prerogatives, the popes empowered them to preach, to hear confessions, and to pronounce absolutions, without any licence from the bishops, and even without consulting them. The Franciscans had the chief management of the sale of indulgences, and the Dominicans directed the inquisition.

The amazing credit of religious orders in general, and the reputation of their founders, made many persons ambitious of distinguishing themselves in the same way; and though the council of Lateran, in 1215, forbade the introduction of any more *new religions*, as they were called, the decree, as Fleury says, was ill observed. For more were established in the two centuries following, than in all the preceding †.

Besides the monks and regulars, there is another sort of religious persons, who, according to their institution, bear the name of St. John of Jerusalem, from whom are descended the knights of Malta; and similar to them were the knights Templars, and the knights of the Teutonic order. These orders had their origin in the time of the crusades, and their first object was to take care of the sick and wounded, and afterwards to defend them. But they distinguished themselves so much in their military capacity, that the order was soon filled with men of a military turn, and

* Eighth Discourse, p. 27. † lb. p. 20.

at length they were most depended upon for any military service. Thus, from their undertaking the defence of their hospital, they undertook the defence of the Holy Land, and by degrees that of other christian countries against all Mahometan powers. The knights of St. John were established in 1090, and being driven from the Holy Land, they retired to Cyprus, then to Rhodes, and they are now settled at Malta.

The knights templars were established in 1118, taking their name from their first house which stood near the temple in Jerusalem. This order grew very rich and powerful, but withal so exceedingly vicious, and it is said atheistical, that, becoming obnoxious in France, Italy, and Spain, the pope was compelled to abolish the order in 1312.

Other orders of knighthood, which had something of religion in their institution, were formed in several parts of Europe, whence arose what are called *Commanderies*, which were originally the office of taking care of the revenues belonging to the military orders, in distant places. The members of some of these orders may marry, and yet enjoy, under the title of *Commanders*, the church lands that are appropriated to their order. Philip II. of Spain was, in this sense, the greatest prelate in the church, next to the pope; because he was the great master of the three military orders of Spain, and enjoyed a good part of the tithe of the church within his territories. The king of Spain, F. Simon says, may always be the richest beneficiary in his kingdom; and by appropriating to his own use the revenues of his commanderies alone, may have enough to live like a king. *

It may not be improper to add, in this place that after the destruction of Jerusalem, many of the Latins remained still in Syria; and retreating into the recesses of mount Libanus, lived in a savage manner, and by degrees lost all sense both of religion and humanity †.

The last order of a religious kind, of which I think it of any consequence to give an account, is that of the *Jesuits*, which was instituted by Ignatius Loyola, and confirmed by the pope, with a view to heal the wounds which the church of Rome had received by

* On Church Revenues, p. 234.

† Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 1, 2.

the reformation, and to supply the place of the monks, and especially that of the mendicants, who were then sunk into contempt. The Jesuits held a middle rank between the monks and the secular clergy, and approached pretty nearly to the regular canons. They all took an oath, by which they bound themselves to go, without deliberation or delay, wherever the pope should think fit to send them. The secrets of this society were not known to all the Jesuits, nor even to all those who were called *professed members*, and were distinguished from those who were called *scholars*, but only to a few of the oldest of them, and those who were approved by long experience. The court and church of Rome derived more assistance from this single order, than from all their other emissaries and ministers, by their application to learning, engaging in controversy, and preaching in distant countries, but more especially by their consummate skill in civil transactions, and getting to themselves almost the whole business of *confession* to crowned heads, and persons of eminence in the state; a business which had before been engrossed by the Dominicans.

The moral maxims of this society were so dangerous and so obnoxious to the temporal princes (added to the temptation of the wealth of which they were possessed) that being charged with many intrigues and crimes of state, they were banished, and had their effects confiscated, first in Portugal, then in Spain, and afterwards in France; and at length the pope was obliged to abolish the whole order.

I shall conclude this article with some particulars that lead us to think unfavourably, and others that may incline us to think more favourably of monks in general.

The religious orders in general have been the great support of the papal power, and of all the superstitions of the church of Rome, in all ages. The worship of saints, and the superstitious veneration for relics were chiefly promoted by their assiduity, in proclaiming their virtues every where, and publishing accounts of miracles wrought by them, and of revelations in their favour. They were also the great venders of indulgences, the founders of the inquisition, and the great

instrument of the papal persecutions. The licentiousness of the monks was become proverbial so early as the fifth century, and they are said in those times, to have excited tumults and seditions in various places.

In some periods the monks, having an unlimited licence to buy and sell, exercised their permission with so little scruple, that it encouraged many great men to usurp the estates of their neighbours; being sure to find purchasers among the monks. F. Simon relates an instance in the abbey of *Mire* in Switzerland, in which the monk who compiled the acts of the Monastery, gives a list of things which were acquired by unjust means, without the least hint of any obligation to make restitution*.

Nothing could exceed the insolence and arrogance of the Dominicans and Franciscans. They even declared publicly, that they had a divine impulse and commission to illustrate and maintain the religion of Jesus Christ, that the true method of salvation was revealed to them alone; and they boasted of their familiar connection with the Supreme Being, the virgin Mary, and the saints in glory. By these means they gained such an ascendancy over the common people, that these would trust no other but the mendicants with the care of their souls†.

St. Francis imprinted upon himself five wounds, similar to those of our Saviour, which his followers asserted were given him by Christ himself; and in this they were encouraged by the mandates of the popes, and by several bulls enjoining the belief of it. They even approved and recommended an impious treatise entitled *The book of the conformities of St. Francis*, composed in 1383 by a Franciscan of Pisa, in which this saint is put on a level with Christ‡.

The Carmelites imposed upon the credulous by asserting that the virgin Mary appeared to the general of their order, and gave him a solemn promise that the souls of all those who left the world with the Carmelite cloak or scapulary upon their shoulders, should be infallibly preserved from eternal damnation; and this impudent fiction found patrons and defenders among

* On Church Revenues, p. 56. † Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 61.
‡ Ib. p. 169.

the pontiffs. Even the late pope Benedict XIV. who is generally esteemed the most candid and sensible of all the popes, is an advocate for this gross imposition *.

It must, however, be acknowledged, that notwithstanding the great mischief that has been done to the christian world by the religious orders, they have, both directly and indirectly, been the occasion of some good; and though they were the chief support of the papal power, they nevertheless contributed something to the diminution of it, and to the reformation.

Such places as monasteries originally were, though they were abused by many, must have been a very desirable retreat to many others, in times of war and confusion. And the opportunity of leisure and meditation, with a total exclusion from the world must have been of great use to those who had been too much immersed in the bustle and the vices of it. For notwithstanding the irregularities with which monks in general were perhaps justly charged, there must have been in all ages, great numbers who conscientiously conformed to the rules of them.

There is no period, perhaps, in which the state of christianity, and of Europe in general, wore a more unfavourable aspect than in the fourteenth century, during the residence of the popes at Avignon; and yet Petrarch, who lived in that age, and who makes heavy and repeated complaints of the vices of it, and especially of the extreme profligacy of the court of Rome, appears to have had a good opinion of the state of many of the monasteries; and his own brother, who had been rather dissolute in his youth, retired to one of them in the very flower of his age; and became truly exemplary for his piety, humanity, and other virtues; which were especially conspicuous during the great plague. Indeed the general credit of the order in all ages cannot be accounted for on any other supposition, than that, as things then stood, they were, upon the whole, really useful.

Another capital advantage which the christian world always derived from the monks, and which we enjoy

* Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 61.

to this day, is the use they were of to literature in general, both on account of the monasteries being the principal repositories of books, and the monks the copiers of them, and because, almost from their first institution, the monks had a greater share of knowledge than the secular clergy. In the seventh century the little learning there was in Europe, was, in a manner, confined to the monasteries, many of the monks being obliged by their rules to devote certain hours every day to study; when the schools which had been committed to the care of the bishops were gone to ruin*.

A very respectable religious fraternity was founded in the fifteenth century, confirmed by the council of Constance called *the brethren and clerks of common life*. The schools erected by this fraternity acquired great reputation. From them issued Erasmus of Rotterdam, and other eminent persons†.

The cause of literature has also been much indebted to the Jesuits, and more lately to the Benedictines; the members of both these orders having produced many works of great erudition and labour, and having employed the revenues of their societies to defray the expence of printing them.

As a proof of the monastic orders having contributed something to the reformation, it may be sufficient to adduce the following facts. The Dominicans and Franciscans soon quarrelled about pre-eminence, and they differed exceedingly amongst themselves; and these differences among the mendicant orders, as well as the divisions of the popedom, and the mutual excommunications of the popes and anti-popes, gave several mortal blows to the authority of the church of Rome, and excited in the minds of men a most ardent desire of reformation‡.

The Fraticelli, or Fratres Minores, were monks who in the same thirteenth century, separated themselves from the community of St. Francis, with a view to observe his rule more strictly. They went about cloathed in loathsome rags, declaiming in all places against the corruptions of the church of Rome, and the vices of

* Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 13. † Ib. vol. iii. p. 254. ‡ Ib. p. 621

the popes and bishops. These were persecuted with the utmost virulence by the other Franciscans, who were countenanced by the popes, and they continued in this violent state of war with the church of Rome till the reformation, multitudes of them perishing in the flames of the inquisition. These rebellious Franciscans, therefore, deserve an eminent rank among those who prepared the way for the reformation, exciting in the minds of the people a just aversion to the church of Rome in its then very corrupt state *.

The original difference of these monks with the pope was perhaps the most trifling and absurd that can well be imagined, viz. the property of the things that were consumed by them, as bread and other provisions; they maintaining that they had not the *property*, but only the *use* of them. This dispute was at first confined to the monks themselves, but at length the popes interposed, and John XXII. declaring that obedience is the principal virtue of monks, and preferable to poverty, they asserted the contrary, maintaining that they ought not to obey their superiors, when they commanded any thing contrary to perfection. John condemning these refractory monks, they declared him a heretic by his own authority. They even went so far as to call him *Antichrist*, and to appeal from his constitution to a future council. At length the revolt went so far, that the monks, supported by the emperor Lewis of Bavaria, pronounced sentence of deposition against the pope, and set up another in his place †.

Since the fifteenth century, in the beginning of which the discipline of the monks was exceedingly relaxed, various reformation have been made, which Mr. Fleury says, has raised the credit of most of the orders ‡. But notwithstanding these reforms, and though nothing is now objected to them with respect to the observance of their rules, they are found to be of so little use in the present state of society, that it seems to be the determination of most of the catholic powers to abolish them by degrees; as appears by the regulations that

* Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 75. † Fleury's eighth Discourse, p. 30.
 Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 74. ‡ Eighth discourse, p. 47.

have been made respecting the time of admission, making it so late in life, that very few will not be so far engaged in other pursuits, as to have no inducement to become monks or nuns ; and the authority of parents, who often found it convenient to dispose of their children in this way, is now generally set aside. In consequence of this, and other causes, which have been operating more silently ever since the reformation, the religious houses are in general but thinly inhabited. Some of their revenues have already been diverted to other uses, and such is the aspect of things at present, and the wants of the several potentates of Europe, that it is justly to be apprehended, that all the rest will soon share the same fate.

THE
HISTORY
OF THE
Corruptions of Christianity.

PART XIII.

The History of CHURCH REVENUES.

THE INTRODUCTION.

IN the preceding parts of this work we have taken a view of the changes which, in the course of time, have taken place with respect to the rank and character of *christian ministers* ; by what steps it came to pass, that, from having no authority whatever, besides what their greater virtue or ability gave them, and especially from

having no dominion over the faith of their fellow christians, the authority of the bishops, with respect to articles of faith, as well as matters of discipline and worship, came to be absolute and despotic; and how, from living in a state of the most submissive subjection to all the temporal powers of the world, and keeping as far as possible from interfering in all civil affairs, they came to be temporal princes and sovereigns themselves, and to controul all the temporal princes of Europe, even in the exercise of their civil power. In this part I shall exhibit a similar view of the changes which have taken place with respect to the *revenues of the church*; and shall shew by what steps ministers of the gospel, from living on the alms of christian societies, together with the poor that belonged to them, came to have independent and even princely incomes, and to engross to themselves a very considerable part of the wealth and even of the landed property of Europe.

SECTION I.

The History of Church Revenues to the Fall of the Western Empire.

IN the constitution of the primitive church the apostles followed the custom of the Jewish synagogues, the members of which contributed every week what they could spare, and entrusted it with those who distributed alms. Like the Jews also, the christians sent alms to distant places, and gave to those who came from a distance with proper recommendations. They were so liberal upon these occasions, that Lucian says, that to become rich in a short time, a man had nothing to do but to pretend to be a christian. In those times both alms and stipends were often called *honoraries*. Thus when Paul bid Timothy *honour widows that are widows indeed*, he means rewarding them for discharging particular offices, which in those days widows held in church-

es. So also the phrase *worthy of double honour* signifies worthy of a double, or a larger reward.

The church had no other revenues besides these voluntary alms till the time of Constantine. Indeed before that time the christian churches were considered as unlawful assemblies, and therefore could no more acquire property, than the Jewish synagogues, or other communities not authorized by the state; though in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, the senate permitting any person to give whatever he pleased to communities *already formed*, the church began, in the third century, by toleration or connivance, to possess estates. But under Constantine christian churches were considered as respectable societies, and from that time they began to grow rich. In 321 this emperor made an edict, addressed to the people of Rome, by which he gave all persons the liberty of leaving by will to the churches, and especially that of Rome, whatever they pleased. He also ordained that what had been taken from the churches in the persecution of Dioclesian should be restored to them, and that the estates of the martyrs who had no heirs, should be given to the churches*.

By this means, in time, all churches had what was called their *patrimony*, and that of Rome in the sixth century had a very great one, not only in Italy, but in other countries; and to inspire a greater respect for these patrimonies, they were denominated by the saints that were most respected in each particular church. Thus the territories belonging to the church of Rome were called the patrimony of St. Peter. But these patrimonies were, like other estates, subject to the laws of the countries in which they were†.

Though the bishops and priests had originally no property of their own, but lived upon the stock of the church, Cyprian complains that some of them in his time, not content with a subsistence in common, began to live in separate houses of their own, and to have each their allowance paid in money, daily, monthly, or for a longer time, and this was soon tolerated. And whereas part of the church stock had always been given

* Anecdotes, p. 129. 131. † Ib. p. 231.

to the poor, the clergy began to encroach upon this part and to appropriate it almost wholly to themselves. That part also which used to be employed in the repairs of churches, &c. was intercepted in the same manner.

All the civil affairs of christian societies were at first managed by deacons, but the disposal of money, as well as of every thing else, was in the power of the presbyters, by whose general directions the deacons acted; and the bishops having encroached upon the presbyters in other things, did not neglect to avail themselves of their authority with respect to the temporalities of the church. And so great was the confidence which the primitive christians reposed in their bishops (and with reason, no doubt, at first) that they alone were allowed to superintend the distribution of the common church stock to the inferior clergy, as well as to the poor, according to the merits or occasions of each individual. But in consequence, probably, of some abuse of this discretionary power, we find afterwards, that not the bishop alone, but the whole body of the presbyters made that distribution. Still, however, it cannot but be supposed that, the bishops having superior influence, more would be in their power in this respect, than in that of the presbyters; and these, being subject to the bishops in other things, would not chuse to disoblige them in this.

We do find, however, that when churches grew very rich, the bishops often embezzled the estates belonging to them. This evil grew to so great a height, that at the council of Gangres in Paphlagonia, held in 324, they were allowed to give some of the church stock to their relations, if they were poor, but were prohibited selling the estates belonging to their churches, and were ordered to give an account of their administration of these temporalities. And that the goods which properly belonged to the bishops might not be confounded with those that belonged to the church, every bishop, upon his election, was ordered to give an account of his possessions, that he might bequeath them, and nothing else, by will. But still the bishops abusing the power that was left them, *stewards* were afterwards appointed to take care of the temporalities of the church, and

the bishops were confined to the cure of souls. These stewards, however, being at first chosen by the bishops, the same abuses were resumed; and therefore at the council of Chalcedon, in 451, the stewards were appointed to be chosen by the body of the clergy*.

This office of steward became so considerable in the church of Constantinople, that the emperors themselves took the nomination of them, till Isaac Comnenus gave it to the patriarch. The power of the steward was not so great in the western churches, but abuses in them being very flagrant, a custom was at length adopted, of dividing the church revenues into four parts, of which one was for the bishop, another for the rest of the clergy, the third for the poor, and the fourth for repairs, or probably a kind of *church stock*, to defray any contingent expences.

This distribution of the church stock was the cause of great animosities and contentions between the bishops and the inferior clergy, in which the popes were often obliged to interpose with their advice and authority; and Father Simon ascribes to it most of the disorders which arose in the western church; the eastern, where that partition was never made, being free from them. For while no division was made, the idea of the property being in the whole society continued, and consequently the clergy were considered as the servants and beneficiaries of the society at large. But that partition made them absolute masters of their respective shares, and gave them independent property; and riches and independence have never been favourable to virtue with the bulk of mankind, or the bulk of any order of men whatever.

But those corruptions of the clergy which arose from the riches of the church began to be peculiarly conspicuous, when, after the time of Constantine, the church came to be possessed of fixed and large revenues. Jerom says, that the church had indeed become more rich and powerful under the christian emperors, but less virtuous; and Chrysostom says that the bishops forsook their employments to sell their corn and wine,

* Simon on Church Revenues, p. 18.

† Ib. p. 20, 21.

and to look after their glebes and farms, besides spending much time in law suits. Austin was very sensible of this, and often refused inheritances left to his church, giving them to the lawful heir, and he would never make any purchases for the use of his church *. Jerom says that the priests of his time spared no tricks or artifices to get the estates of private persons ; and he mentions many low and fordid offices, to which priests and monks stooped, in order to get the favour and the estates of old men and women, who had no children †.

The disorders of the clergy must have been very great in the time of Jerom, since the emperors were then obliged to make many laws to restrain them. In 370 Valentinian made a law to put a stop to the avarice of the clergy, forbidding priests and monks to receive any thing, either by gift or will, from widows, virgins, or any women. Twenty years after he made another law, to forbid deaconesses to give or bequeath their effects to the clergy, or the monks, or to make the churches their heirs ; but Theodosius revoked that edict ‡. We may form some idea of the riches of the church of Rome towards the middle of the third century, from this circumstance, that in that time, according to Eusebius, it maintained one thousand five hundred persons, widows, orphans, and poor ; and it had then forty-six priests, besides the bishop and other officers §.

SECTION II.

The History of Church Revenues after the Fall of the Western Empire.

UPON the invasion of the Roman empire by the Norman nations, both the ecclesiastical laws and revenues underwent a great alteration, and upon the whole very favourable to the church, as a political system,

* Simon on Church Revenues, p. 17. † Ib. p. 27. 28.

‡ Anecdotes, p. 133. &c. § Hist. Lib. vi. Cap. 43. p. 312.

though for some time, and in some cases, it was unfavourable to the clergy. For these savage conquerors made little distinction between the goods of the church and other property, but distributed both as they thought proper, even to laymen; and children often succeeded to their fathers in church livings, as well as in other estates. Also many estates belonging to churches were transferred to monasteries.

About this time, however, began the custom of granting estates to ecclesiastical persons in the same manner, and upon the same terms, as they had been granted to laymen, viz. for the lives of particular bishops or abbots, as we find about the year 500, under pope Symmachus, but afterwards to the churches and monasteries in general; the ecclesiastics swearing fealty and allegiance for them, and rendering the same services that the lay lords rendered for their estates. Hence the term *benefice* came to be applied to church livings. For that term was originally applied to estates granted to laymen upon condition of military service.

In no part of the world were the clergy so great gainers by this system as in Germany, where whole principalities were given to churches and monasteries; whereby bishops became, in all respects, independent sovereign princes, as they are at this day. This was chiefly the effect of the liberality of the emperors of the name of Otho. Churchmen, both bishops and abbots, being at this time principally employed in all the great affairs of state, it was not difficult for them to obtain whatever they desired of princes.

In those times of confusion, when property in land, and every thing else, was very precarious, many persons chose to make over the property of their estates to churches and monasteries, obtaining from them a lease for several lives. The property being in the church, it was held more sacred, especially after the entire settlement of the northern nations in the western part of the Roman empire, and when the rage of conquest was over. In these circumstances a lease for a few lives, on an easy rent, was of more value to individuals than the absolute property.

The possession of benefices was attended, however,

with one incumbrance, from which the church did not very soon free itself. According to the ancient feudal laws, when a tenant died, the lord enjoyed the revenues till his successor was invested, and had sworn fealty; and it was natural that this law should affect churchmen as well as laymen. This, however, interfered with the ancient custom of the church. For during the vacancy of a bishoprick, the profits were usually managed by the clergy and the archdeacons, for the use of the future bishop. But after the general collation of benefices, the princes first demanded the revenues of those estates which they had granted to the church, and afterwards of all church livings without distinction, and this was called *regale*. This right of *regale* was not settled in France in the third race of their kings*, and was probably first established upon the agreement between pope Calixtus and the emperor Henry †.

Lewis the Young is the first king of France, who mentions the right of *regale*, in the year 1161. And we find in the history of England, that this right of *regale* was established in this kingdom at the same time that it was in France, and that it occasioned many troubles here ‡.

By degrees, however, the estates which had been long in the possession of the clergy began to be considered as so much theirs, and the temper of the times was so favourable to the claims of the church, that it was thought wrong for laymen to meddle with any part of it; and many princes were induced to relinquish the right of *regale*. The Emperor Frederic II. remitted this right to the church, as if it had been an usurpation; and several councils prohibited princes and other laymen from invading the goods and revenues of churchmen after their death §.

Afterwards, however, when the popes usurped the nomination to ecclesiastical benefices, they thought proper to claim what had been the *regale*, or the value of one year's income (for to that it had been reduced,

* Simon on Church Revenues, p. 94. † Ib. p. 98. ‡ Ib.
§ Ib. p. 100.

as a medium of what had been due to the lord during a vacancy) and then this perquisite was called *annates*. This claim is said to have been first made by pope Urban VI. and was paid both in England and throughout the western part of Christendom *. In this country the annates were transferred to the crown in the reign of Henry VIII. and so they continue to this day, except that small livings were released from this burthen in the reign of queen Anne.

On account of the benefit accruing to the popes from these annates, they encouraged resignations and the changing of livings among the clergy. For upon every event of this nature this tax to themselves became due. Originally resignations were made absolutely, into the hands of those who had a right to dispose of the benefice, and when it appeared that there was no lawful reason for the resignation, it was not admitted. But afterwards resignations were made *in favorem*, or upon condition that the benefice should go to some person in whose favour it was made, and with whom a contract had been made for that purpose. This custom is so new, that no mention is made of it in the canon law, the *Décretals*, or the *Sext*. The new canonists called the contract a simoniacal one, and therefore there is a necessity for the pope to grant a dispensation for it, he being above all canon and positive law. Nothing derogated more from the right of ordinaries and patrons than these resignations *in favorem*; for by this means they who possessed benefices disposed of them as of their own inheritance. By this means they even descended in families †.

Another deduction from the value of livings the clergy suffered by the popes claiming the tenth of their value, which was done about the same time that annates were demanded. This they did upon the pretence that the high priest among the Jews had a tenth of the tithes which were paid to the other priests. Another pretence for making this exaction arose from the *Crusades*. The contributions of those who did not serve in

* Hist. of Popery, vol. iv. p. 37.

† Simon on Church Revenues, p. 239.

person being casual, the popes imposed a tax upon all ecclesiastical revenues, and the first of the kind was on the occasion of the loss of Jerusalem. Afterwards the popes pretended to a right of disposing of all ecclesiastical goods, and sometimes demanded a twentieth, and even a tenth of their revenues, for other purposes besides the Crusades. They also made them over to the kings, who by this means shared with the popes in the plunder of the people *. This tenth the popes obtained occasionally in England from the time of Edward I. when the demand was first made. In the twenty-sixth of Henry VIII. an act was made to annex these tenths to the crown for ever: but they were given to the poor clergy towards an augmentation of their maintenance by queen Anne, and at the same time all small livings were discharged from paying them.

The holy wars in the eleventh century were the cause of great accessions of wealth to the church. Most of the knights made their wills before their departure, and never failed to leave a considerable share of their possessions to the church; and they built churches and monasteries with ample endowments at their return, by way of thanksgiving for their preservation: so that whether they returned or not, the church generally received some permanent advantage from the expedition.

One of the most valuable acquisitions to the revenues of the church, but from the nature of it the most impolitic in various respects, and the most burthensome to the state is that of *tithes*. It is a great discouragement to the improvement of land, that a tenth part of the clear produce, without any deduction for the advanced expence of raising that produce, should go from the cultivator of the land to any other person whatever. It would be far better to lay an equivalent tax upon all estates, cultivated or not cultivated. For then it would operate as a motive to industry; whereas the present mode of taxation is a discouragement to it. Besides, this method of paying the minister is a continual source of dispute between the clergy and the par-

* Fleury's sixth Discourse, p. 19.

issioners, which is of a most pernicious nature ; making the people consider as enemies those whom they ought to respect as their best friends, and in whom they ought to repose the greatest confidence.

The original reason for the payment of tithes was the most groundless imaginable, as it rose from considering christian ministers as an order of men who succeeded to the rights of the *priests* under the Jewish law. This idea was observed to prevail very much about the time of the utter desolation of Judea under Adrian. But it was a long time before there was any idea of claiming those tithes as a right. Even the Jews acknowledge that no tithes were paid by themselves after the destruction of the temple. But about the fifth century laws being made by the emperor, by which the tenth part of the mines and quarries were paid to themselves, and the lords of the soil ; there arose a custom, as some say, of paying tithes to the church, which in time became general ; till from the force of example, the omission of it was deemed reproachful, and the clergy began to claim them as due to themselves by the law of Moses.

For some centuries, however, it was usual to give tithes to the poor, and for other charitable purposes. Thus at a council of Macon, in 586, it was ordered that a tenth part of the fruits of the earth should be brought into sacred places, to be employed for the relief of the poor, and the redemption of captives*. By degrees, however, the clergy excluded the poor, and appropriated the tithes to themselves. And about the year 600, tithes, from being established as a custom, became in some instances, *legal rights* ; because many estates were bequeathed with an obligation to pay tithes to particular churches. When these tithes were left to distant churches, the priest of the parish in which the estate lay used to complain ; and at length in the reign of king John, the pope made a law, ordering that all tithes should be paid to the parish priest, and after some time they were levied by law in all parishes without exception. At the reformation, though those who took the lead in it were sincerely

* Suet.

disposed to abolish tithes, they found themselves obliged to continue, and to secure them by act of parliament, in order to conciliate the minds of the popish clergy. Thus this most intolerable evil continues to this day, whereas in other protestant countries, and especially in Holland, the civil magistrates have adopted a wiser plan, by allowing their ministers a fixed stipend, paid out of the public funds.

The progress of superstition in the dark ages supplied many resources for the augmentation of the wealth of the clergy. In those times the world was made to believe that by virtue of a number of masses, the recitation of which might be purchased with money, and especially with permanent endowments to churches and monasteries, souls might be redeemed out of purgatory ; and scenes of visions and apparitions, sometimes of souls in torment, and sometimes of souls delivered from torment, were published in all places. These had so wonderful an effect that in two or three centuries church endowments increased to such a degree, that if the scandals of the clergy on the one hand, and the statutes of mortmain on the other, had not restrained the profuseness that mankind had been wrought up to on this account, it is not easy to imagine how far it might have gone, perhaps to the entire subjection of the temporality, as Burnet says, to the spirituality *. And it was carefully inculcated by the priests, that rights acquired to the church belonged to God, and therefore could not be taken away without sacrilege.

It was the fate of this country to suffer more from papal usurpation than almost any other part of Christendom. One tax to the church of Rome was peculiar to this country, which was *Peter pence*, or a tax of a penny a year for every house in which there were twenty penny-worth of goods. This was first granted by Ina king of the West Saxons, about the year 726, for the establishment and support of an English college at Rome. It was afterwards extended by Offa over all Mercia and East Anglia ; and in the days of Athelwolf, though the popes appropriated the profits

* Exposition of the Articles, p. 280.

of this tax to themselves, it was extended over all England. It was also confirmed by the laws of Canute, of Edward the Confessor, of William the Conqueror, and of several succeeding princes, though it was long considered as a *free alms* on the part of the nation, and was often refused to be paid, especially by Edward III. However, it was not totally abolished till the reign of Henry VIII*.

So far did the popish exactions in this country, on one account or other, go, that, in the reign of Henry III. the popes received from England more than the king's revenue, or one hundred and twenty thousand pounds†. In 1366 the lord chancellor assured the parliament, that the taxes paid to the pope were five times as much as the king's revenue‡; and at length the church is said to have got possession of one third of all the landed property in England§.

Notwithstanding the ample revenues of many churches, numbers of the clergy contrived to make large additions to them, by appropriating to themselves the emoluments of several church livings; though they could not reside, and do duty at them all, and nothing could be more contrary to the natural reason of things, or the original constitution of the christian church. Indeed the maxim that where no duty is done, no reward is due, was so obvious, that this was one of the last abuses, that crept into the church. But it grew, under various pretences, to a most enormous height; though several attempts were made, at different times to lessen the evil.

About the year 500, when what we now call *benefices*, came into use, it became customary to ordain without any title, or designation to a particular cure; and many persons got themselves ordained priests for secular purposes. Also many prelates wanted to increase their authority by attaching to themselves a number of dependents, and many of the people wanted spiritual privileges, in order to exempt them from the jurisdiction of princes. Even bishops (though this was

* Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 278.

† Hist. of Popery, vol. iii. p. 60.

‡ Ib. p. 570.

§ Ib. vol. v. p. 266.

done with more caution) were ordained without any diocese, except in infidel countries, which they never visited; and these acted as substitutes for those bishops who were too lazy, or too much employed in secular affairs, to do duty themselves. This corruption had arisen to a most enormous height before the council of Trent.

The consequence of titular ordination was *non-residence*, and where curates were employed the principal could follow his other business. Accordingly the bishops in France, and even the parish priests, substituting some poor priests in their room, passed much of their time at court. And if a bishop could hold one living without residing upon it, it was plain that he might hold two or more, and get them supplied in the same manner.

Titular ordinations, however, which first introduced *non-residence*, were not the only cause of *pluralities*, which are said to have had their origin about the sixth century. Among benefices bestowed upon the churches, some, as prebends, &c. had no *cure of souls* annexed to them. These were judged capable of being held by priests who had other livings with cure of souls. Also parishes which were not able to maintain a minister were allowed to be served by another minister in the neighbourhood, but a dispensation from the pope was necessary for this purpose. By this means, however, the greatest scandal in pluralities was practised. This abuse gave very great offence, but dispensations of this kind were so necessary to support the dignity of cardinals, that they were perpetual in the court of Rome. The cardinal of Lorraine, who held some of the best benefices in France, and some in Scotland too, was particularly vehement in his declaration against pluralities in general, at the council of Trent, without imagining that his own were liable to any objection.

The first account of any flagrant abuse of pluralities occurs in the year 936, when Manasseh, bishop of Arles, obtained of his relation, Hugh king of Italy, several other bishopricks, so that in all he had four or five at the same time. Baronius says, that this was a

new and great evil, which began to stain the church of God, and by which it has been wonderfully afflicted *.

A person is said to hold a church in *commendam*, when he is empowered to have the care and the profits of it till the appointment of another incumbent. This practice was of great antiquity, in order to prevent churches receiving any detriment during a vacancy. But on this pretence livings were afterwards granted for a certain time, which was made longer and longer, or till an event which it was known could not take place, and at length for life. This was done by the plenary power of the pope. In this manner Clement VII. brought pluralities to perfection, by making his nephew, the cardinal de Medicis, *commendatory universal*; granting him all the vacant benefices in the world, whether secular or regular, dignities, parsonages, simple, or with cure of souls, for six months, and appointing him usufructury from the first day of his possession. In England, in which every abuse and imposition in ecclesiastical matters were carried to the greatest extent, the richest and best benefices were engrossed by the pope, and given in commendam to Italians, who never visited the country, but employed questors to collect their revenues.

Other methods of making pluralities, and disposing of church revenues, were contrived by the court of Rome, such as *provisions* and *exemptions*, which are hardly worth describing, and selling the reversion of livings, called *expectatives*, as well as livings actually vacant.

The first attempt that we meet with to check these evils, of pluralities and non-residence, was made by Charlemagne, who made several regulations for that purpose; but they were soon neglected. Several popes also, as John XXII. and Clement V. pretended to reform the same abuses, but without any real effect; and, by the evasion of them even illiterate persons and children, who were never intended to take orders, might enjoy benefices †.

* Sueton. A. D. 936. † Pennington on Pluralities, p. 58.

The council of Trent pretended to remedy the evil of pluralities, but they made it worse by admitting of *pensions* as an equivalent for the change of benefices and other purposes. For these came to be granted by the court of Rome without any consideration, and even to children. They were also more convenient, and made church preferment a more easy traffic in many respects. For instance, resignations were not deemed valid, unless the person who resigned lived twenty days afterwards; whereas a *pension* might be transferred at the point of death. Besides it might be turned into ready money, whereas a benefice could not without simony*.

It is to be lamented that these abuses were not corrected at the reformation of the church of England. On the contrary, it is apprehended that many of them are increased since that period, so as to exceed what is generally to be found of that nature in some Roman Catholic countries. In consequence of this, though the funds for the maintenance of the clergy are sufficiently ample, the inequality in the distribution of them is shameful, and they bear no proportion to the services or merit of those who receive them. This is an evil that calls loudly for redress, and strikes many persons who give no attention to articles of faith, or of discipline in other respects. Probably, however, this evil will be tolerated, till the whole system be reformed, or destroyed. But without the serious reformation of this and other crying abuses, the utter destruction of the present hierarchy must, in the natural course of things, be expected.

* F. Paul on Ecclesiastical Benefices, p. 224.

THE
GENERAL CONCLUSION.

PART I.

Containing Considerations addressed to Unbelievers, and especially to Mr. GIBBON.

To consider the system (if it may be called a *system*) of christianity *a priori*, one would think it very little liable to corruption or abuse. The great outline of it is, that the universal parent of mankind commissioned Jesus Christ, to invite men to the practice of virtue, by the assurance of his mercy to the penitent, and of his purpose to raise to immortal life and happiness all the virtuous and the good, but to inflict an adequate punishment on the wicked. In proof of this he wrought many miracles, and after a public execution he rose again from the dead. He also directed that proselytes to his religion should be admitted by *baptism*, and that his disciples should eat bread and drink wine in commemoration of his death.

Here is nothing that any person could imagine would lead to much subtle speculation, at least such as could excite much animosity. The doctrine itself is so plain, that one would think the learned and the unlearned were upon a level with respect to it. And a person unacquainted with the state of things at the time of its promulgation, would look in vain for any probable source of the monstrous corruptions and abuses which crept into the system afterwards. Our Lord, however, and his apostles, foretold that there would be a great departure from the truth, and that something would arise in the church altogether unlike the doctrine which they taught, and even subversive of it.

In reality, however, the causes of the succeeding corruptions did then exist; and accordingly, without any thing more than their natural operation, all the

abuses arose to their full height ; and what is more wonderful still, by the operation of natural causes also, without any miraculous interposition of providence, we see the abuses gradually corrected, and christianity recovering its primitive beauty and glory.

The causes of the corruptions were almost wholly contained in the established opinions of the heathen world, and especially the philosophical part of it ; so that when those heathens embraced christianity they mixed their former tenets and prejudices with it. Also, both Jews and heathens were so much scandalized at the idea of being the disciples of a man who had been crucified as a common malefactor, that christians in general were sufficiently disposed to adopt any opinion that would most effectually wipe away this reproach.

The opinion of the mental faculties of man belonging to a substance distinct from his body or brain, and of this invisible spiritual part, or *soul*, being capable of subsisting before and after its union to the body, which had taken the deepest root in all the schools of philosophy, was wonderfully calculated to answer this purpose. For by this means, christians were enabled to give to the soul of Christ what rank they pleased in the heavenly regions before his incarnation. On this principle went the Gnostics, deriving their doctrine from the received oriental philosophy. Afterwards the philosophizing christians went upon another principle, personifying the wisdom, or *λογος* of God the Father. But this was mere Platonism, and therefore cannot be said to have been unnatural in their circumstances, though at length they came, in the natural progress of things, to believe that Christ was, in power and glory, equal to God the Father himself.

From the same opinion of a soul distinct from the body came the practice of praying, first *for* the dead, and then *to* them, with a long train of other absurd opinions, and superstitious practices.

The abuses of the *positive institutions* of christianity, monstrous as they were, naturally arose from the opinion of the purifying and sanctifying virtue of rites and ceremonies, which was the very basis of all the worship of the heathens ; and they were also similar to the

abuses of the Jewish religion. We likewise see the rudiments of all the *monkish austerities* in the opinions and practices of the heathens, who thought to purify and exalt the soul by macerating and mortifying the body.

As to the abuses in the *government of the church*, they are as easily accounted for as abuses in civil government; worldly minded men being always ready to lay hold of every opportunity of increasing their power; and in the dark ages too many circumstances concurred to give the christian clergy peculiar advantages over the laity in this respect.

Upon the whole, I flatter myself that, to an attentive reader of this work, it will appear, that the corruption of christianity, in every article of faith or practice, was the natural consequence of the circumstances in which it was promulgated; and also that its recovery from these corruptions is the natural consequence of different circumstances. LET UNBELIEVERS, IF THEY CAN, ACCOUNT AS WELL FOR THE FIRST RISE AND ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY ITSELF. This is a problem, which, historians and philosophers (bound to believe that no effect is produced without an adequate cause) will find to be of more difficult solution the more closely it is attended to.

The circumstances that Mr. Gibbon enumerates as the immediate *causes* of the spread of christianity were themselves *effects*, and necessarily required such causes as, I imagine, he would be unwilling to allow. The revolution produced by christianity in the opinions and conduct of men, as he himself describes it, was truly astonishing; and this, he cannot deny, was produced without the concurrence, nay notwithstanding the opposition, of all the civil powers of the world; and what is perhaps more, it was opposed by all the learning, genius, and wit of the age too. For christianity was assailed as much by ridicule and reproach as it was by open persecution; and, be the spread of it what Mr. Gibbon pleases, he cannot deny that it kept uniformly gaining ground, taking in all descriptions of men without distinction, before it had any foreign aid; and what then remained of the old religions was not

sufficient to occasion any sensible obstruction to the full establishment of it. The Jewish religion alone was an exception; and this circumstance, together with the rise of christianity among the Jews, are facts that deserve Mr. Gibbon's particular attention.

Of all mankind, the Jews were the most unlikely to set up any religion, so different from their own; and as unlikely was it that other nations, and especially the polite and learned among them, should receive a religion from Jews, and those some of the most ignorant of that despised nation.

Let Mr. Gibbon recollect his own idea of the Jews, which seems to be much the same with that of Voltaire, and think whether it be at all probable, that they should have originally invented a religion so essentially different from any other in the world, as that which is described in the books of Moses; that the whole nation should then have adopted without objection, what they were afterwards so prone to abandon for the rites of any of their neighbours; or that when, by severe discipline, they had acquired the attachment to it which they are afterwards known to have done, and which continues to this day, it be probable they would have invented, or have adopted another, which they conceived to be so different from, and subversive of their own. If they had been so fertile of invention, it might have been expected that they would have struck out some other since the time of Christ, a period of near two thousand years.

On this subject Mr. Gibbon says *, that "in contradiction to every known principle of the human mind, that singular people seem to have yielded a stronger and more ready assent to the traditions of their remote ancestors, than to the evidence of their own senses." A singular people, indeed, if this was the case; for then they must not have been *men*, but beings in the shape of men only, though internally constituted in some very different manner. But what facts in history may not be represented as probable or improbable, on such loose suppositions as these? Such liber-

* History, vol. i. p. 539.

ties as these I shall neither take, nor grant. *Jews are men*, and men are beings, whose affections and actions are subject to as strict rules as those of the animate or inanimate parts of nature. Their conduct, therefore, must be accounted for on such principles as always have influenced the conduct of men, and such as we observe still to influence men.

I wish Mr. Gibbon would consider whether he does not, in the passage above quoted, use the word *tradition* in an improper manner. By tradition we generally mean something for which we have not the evidence of histories written at the time of the events. We never talk of the tradition of the wars of Julius Cæsar, or of his death in the senate house, nor even of the tradition of the conquests of Alexander the Great; because there were histories of those events written at the time, or so near to the time, as to be fully within the memory of those who were witnesses of them.

Now Moses, and the other writers of the Old Testament, were as much present at the time of the transactions they relate, as the historians of Julius Cæsar, or Alexander. An incautious reader (and there are too many such) would be apt to imagine from Mr. Gibbon's manner of expressing himself, that the Jews did not even pretend to have *written histories* of the same age with the origin of their religion, but that it was in the same predicament with what he calls "the elegant" "mythology of Greece and Rome;" whereas, the fact is, that every tittle of it was committed to writing at the time. It is generally in such an *indirect* manner as this, and not by a fair and candid representation of facts, that unbelievers endeavour to discredit the system of revelation.

Let Mr. Gibbon, as an historian, compare the rise and progress of Mahometanism, with that of Judaism, or of christianity, and attend to the difference. Besides the influence of the *sword*, which christianity certainly had not, Mahometanism stood on the basis of the Jewish and christian revelations. If these had not been firmly believed in the time of Mahomet, what credit would his religion have gained? In these circumstances he must have invented some other system,

which would have required *visible miracles* of its own, which he might have found some difficulty in passing upon his followers; though they were in circumstances far more easy to be imposed upon than the Jews or the heathens, in the time of our Saviour. This was an age of light and of suspicion; the other, if any, of darkness and credulity. That christianity *grew up in silence and obscurity*, as Mr. Gibbon says*; is the very reverse of the truth. He could not himself imagine circumstances in which the principal facts on which christianity is founded should be subject to a more rigid scrutiny. *These things*, as Paul said to king Agrippa, *were not done in a corner.* Acts xxvi. 26.

It appears to me, that, admitting all the miraculous events which the evangelical history asserts; it was not probable that christianity should have been received with less difficulty than it was; but without that assistance, absolutely impossible for it to have been received at all.

Mr. Gibbon represents the discredit into which the old religions were fallen, as having made way for the new one. "So urgent," says he†, "on the vulgar" "is the necessity of believing, that the fall of any" "system of mythology will most probably be succeeded" "by the introduction of some other mode of supersti-" "tion."

But are not the vulgar, *men*, as well as the learned, their understanding being naturally as good and as various, and certainly subject to the same laws; and *necessity of believing*, or *proneness to belief* is not greater in one than in the other; but the expression is loose and inaccurate, and calculated to impose on superficial readers. Besides, if any set of men had this property of *proneness to believe*, they must, to be all of a piece, have a proportionable unwillingness to quit their belief, at least without very sufficient evidence; and yet those *vulgar* of all nations, are supposed by Mr. Gibbon to have abandoned the belief of their own mythology some time before christianity came, to supply the vacancy. Such *vulgar* as those I should think

* Vol. i. p. 535. † Ib. p. 602.

intitled to the more respectable appellation of *free thinkers*, which with many is synonymous to *philosophers*. And, in fact, it was not with the vulgar, but with the philosophers, that the religions of Greece and Rome were fallen into discredit. We ought, therefore, to judge of their case by that of the philosophical part of the world at present.

With many of *them* christianity is now rejected; but do they, on that account, seem disposed to adopt any other mode of religion, or any other system of mythology in its place? And would not such men as Mr. Hume or Helvetius among the dead, and Mr. Gibbon himself among the living, examine with scrupulous exactness the pretensions of any system of divine revelation, especially before he would regulate his life by it, and go to the stake for it. And yet philosophers of antiquity, men of as good understanding as Mr. Gibbon, and who, no doubt, loved life, and the pleasures and advantages of it, as much as he does, embraced christianity, and died for it.

But besides the *urgency of this necessity of believing*, another cause of the rapid spread of christianity, was that it held out to mankind something worth believing. “When the promise of eternal happiness,” he says *, “was proposed to mankind, on condition of adopting the faith, and observing the precepts of the gospel, it is no wonder that so advantageous an offer should be accepted by great numbers of every religion, of every rank, and of every province in the Roman empire.”

Now it is certainly no discredit to christianity, that the views it exhibits of a future state appeared more rational, and more inviting, than the accounts of *Tartarus* and the *Elysian shades*. But besides appearing more *inviting*, they must also have appeared more *credible*, from the general external evidence of the truth of christianity. And here also Mr. Gibbon seems to have been inattentive to the principles of human nature.

In general the more *extraordinary* any event appears

* History, vol. i. p. 561.

to be, the more evidence we require of it. It is this consideration that makes more definite evidence necessary for a miracle, than for an ordinary fact; though it is acknowledged, that the *desirableness* of any particular event, by interesting our *wishes*, will tend to make us admit it on somewhat less evidence. The great advantages, therefore, proposed to men from any scheme, especially one in which they were to run some risk, and in which they were to make great sacrifices, would not dispose them to receive it without evidence. *It is too good news to be true*, is a remark perpetually made by the very *vulgar* of whom Mr. Gibbon is speaking. When the disciples of our Lord saw him for the first time after his resurrection, it is said (Luke xxiv. 41.) that *they believed not through joy*; and when, before this, they were told by three or four women of character, and for whom they had the highest respect, that they had themselves seen him alive, and had a message from him to them, *Their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not*. Luke, xxiv. 11. This was perfectly natural; and such circumstances as these are strong internal evidence of the historians describing real facts, and real feelings of the human heart corresponding to those facts.

Besides, how can any man, to use Mr. Gibbon's own language, *adopt the faith* of the gospel, whatever promises might be made to him for so doing, unless its tenets appeared to him to be *reasonable*? What would Mr. Gibbon take to believe the doctrine of the Trinity, or what would he sacrifice in this life for the most magnificent promise in a future one, made by a person whose ability to make good that promise he at all suspected. Plato's doctrine of the *immortality of the soul* was sufficiently flattering: but whom was it ever known to influence, like the christian doctrine of a *resurrection*? The plain reason was, that the latter was proposed with sufficient *evidence*, whereas the former was altogether destitute of it.

It is amusing enough to observe how very differently Mr. Gibbon represents the state of the heathen world with respect to christianity, when he would insinuate an apology for the persecution of the christians. "It

“might be expected,” he says *, “that they would unite with indignation against any sect or people, which would separate itself from the communion of mankind, and, claiming the exclusive privilege of divine knowledge, should disclaim every form of worship except its own, as impious and idolatrous.”

Mr. Gibbon, I suppose, never asked himself whether it was natural for the same kind of people to be so very differently affected towards the same thing. But, unfortunately, his purpose required that to account for the ready reception of christianity upon insufficient evidence, some of those heathens must be furnished with an *urgent necessity of believing* any new religion that was proposed to them, especially one that promised such great and glorious things as christianity did; while, on the other hand, to account also for the very ill reception that the preachers of christianity met with (which he cannot deny) others of them must be furnished with a disposition to hate and detest those who pretended to so much.

I do not know any thing that can help Mr. Gibbon in this case better than the known principles of his favourite *mythology*. As the present race of mankind are derived from the stones which Deucalion and Pyrrha threw over their heads (when perhaps they were in too much haste to repeople the vacant world) they might not be sufficiently attentive to the nature of those materials of the future race of mortals, but take stones of different degrees of hardness. In consequence of this, some of them may have been of a softer disposition, and more easy of belief than others. Being, therefore, so differently constituted; the descendants of some of them might be instinctive believers, and others instinctive persecutors of those believers. They would then be, of course, as hostile to each other as those men who sprung out of the earth, from the sowing of the serpents teeth, in the elegant mythology of Greece, as the story is most elegantly related by Ovid †.

* History, vol. i. p. 622. † I have heard of a young gentleman of a sceptical and jocular turn, taking off his hat to a statue of Jupiter (who makes the most respectable figure in this system of

Besides these considerations, Mr. Gibbon mentions the *zeal* of the primitive christians, and the strictness of their *discipline*, as causes of the spread of the new religion. But he should have told us whence came that zeal, and that strictness of discipline. If no sufficient *cause* of it had appeared, their zeal would have exposed them to contempt; and their discipline would have discouraged rather than have invited profelytes.

Any person may hold himself excused from investigating the causes that gave birth to the opinions of *individuals* of mankind, on account of the difficulty and uncertainty of such an investigation. The same may, in some degree, be said of particular classes of men. But christianity recommended itself to every description of men then existing, and influenced them not for a short time only, which might be accounted for from temporary and local circumstances, but *permanently*; so as to leave no reasonable doubt, but that it would have gone on to establish itself in the world, and to extirpate idolatry, if the civil powers had continued to oppose its progress three thousand years, as they did three hundred years; and what is more, notwithstanding the gross corruptions and abuses which soon crept into it.

A fact of this kind requires to be accounted for from the most obvious principles of human nature, principles common to all men; and all classes of men; therefore none but the plainest and most cogent *causes of assent*, deserve to be attended to. This assent to the truth of christianity could only be produced by such evidence as always will, and always ought to determine the assent of the human mind.

It is acknowledged that to be a christian a man must believe some facts that are of an extraordinary nature, such as we have no opportunity of observing at present. But those facts were so circumstanced, that persons who cannot be denied to have had the best opportunity

mythology) and saying, "If ever you come into power again, please to remember that I shewed you respect when nobody else did." Mr. Gibbon, I hope, has no serious views in complimenting the religion of Grece and Rome, meaning to pay his court to the *powers that may be*, as others do to those that *are*.

of examining the evidence of them, and who, if they had not been true, had no motive to pay any regard to them, could not refuse their assent to them; that is, it was such evidence as we ourselves must have been determined by, if we had been in their place; and therefore, if not fully equivalent to the evidence of our own senses at present, is, at least, all the evidence that, at this distance of time, we *can* have in the case. It goes upon the principle that human nature was the same thing then that it is now; and certainly in all other respects it appears to be so.

That miracles are things in themselves *possible*, must be allowed so long as it is evident that there is in nature a power equal to the working of them. And certainly the *power, principle, or being*, by whatever name it be denominated, which produced the universe, and established the laws of it, is fully equal to any occasional departures from them. The *object and use* of those miracles on which the christian religion is founded, is also maintained to be consonant to the object and use of the general system of nature, viz. the production of happiness. We have nothing, therefore to do, but to examine, by the known rules of estimating the value of *testimony*, whether there be reason to think that such miracles have been wrought, or whether the evidence of christianity, or of the christian history, does not stand upon as good ground as that of any other history whatever.

Now, though I am far from holding myself out as the champion of christianity, against all the world, I own I shall have no objection to discuss this subject with Mr. Gibbon, as an historian, and a philosopher. We are only two individuals, and no other persons can be bound by the result of our discussion. But those who have given less attention to the subject than we have done, may be instructed by it, and be assisted in forming their own judgment, according to the evidence that shall be laid before them. At least, it may be a means of drawing some degree of attention to a subject which cannot be denied to be, in the highest degree, interesting.

Indeed, if any man can say, that it is not an interesting question, whether his existence terminate at death, or

is to be resumed at a future period, and then to continue for ever, he must be of a low and abject mind. To a rational being, capable of contemplating the wonders of nature, and of investigating the laws of it, and to a being of a social disposition, his existence, and the continuance of his rational faculties, must be an object of unspeakable value to him; and consequently he must ardently wish that christianity (which alone *brings life and immortality to light*) may be true. For to a philosopher, who forms his judgment by what he actually observes, the doctrine of a *soul*, capable of subsisting and acting when the body is in the grave, will never give any satisfaction. To every person, therefore, who is capable of enjoying his existence, the christian doctrine of a *resurrection*, opens a glorious and transporting prospect.

Voluntarily to shut one's eyes on such a prospect, and really to wish to see no more of the wonders of nature, and of the progress of being, and especially of the human race, towards perfection, but to hide one's head in everlasting obscurity, must be to have a disposition as groveling, base, and abject, as that of the lowest of the brute creation. A man of the least elevation of mind, and of a cultivated and improved understanding must, surely, lament such a catastrophe.

The fear might be, that every truly sensible and virtuous man would be too strongly biassed in favour of christianity and (if Mr. Gibbon's observation above mentioned be true) give his assent long before he had waited to weigh the evidence as he ought to do. I do not, however, wish Mr. Gibbon to shew this disposition. On the contrary, I wish to examine every thing with the greatest rigour, and I will not contend with him for trifles. With respect to some points which he has laboured, though I am satisfied his representations are partial and unfair, I have no objection to concede almost all that he contends for; because, though he has taken very liberally, he has left me enough.

When the circumstances of the Jews and heathens, at the time of the promulgation of christianity, shall be sufficiently considered (but to which it is evident Mr. Gibbon has given but a slight attention) the re-

ception that this new religion met with among them, and the total subversion of the several systems of paganism by it, will be found to be a more extraordinary thing, on the supposition of the gospel history not being true, more contrary to the present course of nature, and consequently more improbable, than the history of Christ and the apostles as contained in the New Testament, which makes the whole of the subsequent history perfectly easy and natural. In short, the question is, whether Mr. Gibbon or myself, believe in more numerous, more extraordinary, or more useless miracles. On this fair unexceptionable ground I am willing to meet him.

I also shall not contend with him for quite so much as his late antagonists, members of the church of England, must include in the system of christianity. But by abandoning their out works, I may perhaps be better able to make an effectual defence.

My religion does not suppose, with bishop Hurd, "that the offices in which the godhead is employed are either degrading or imply an immoderate and inconceivable condescension*:" I shall not urge Mr. Gibbon to admit, that "a divine person, divine in the highest sense of the word, descended from heaven, and suffered death†, that the *divine nature* condescended to leave the mansions of glory, was made man, dwelled among us, and died for us‡.

I shall not pretend, with the same learned bishop, that *a third divine person* gave this second divine person "power to cast out devils, and raised him from the dead§." Neither shall I urge him with "a purpose to save and sanctify men by means that he himself can think fanciful or delusive¶," and maintain that Christ, "in virtue of his all atoning death, has opened the gates of eternal life, to the whole race of mortal men||" which the bishop enumerates among "the

* See Bishop Hurd's Sermons, vol. iii. p. 33. † Ib. p. 63.

‡ That the *divine nature* of Christ should *die*, is, surely, more than Dr. Hurd's christian creed obliges him to assert, unless he may think that without this, his doctrine of *atonement* could not be completed. § Bishop Hurd's Sermons. vol. ii. p. 337.

¶ Ib. vol. iii. p. 33.

|| Ib. vol. iii. p. 64.

“great things of which Christ spake, and the amazing topics with which he filled his discourses *.”

I am sensible that it would be in vain to urge any external historical evidence of a revelation, of which such doctrines as these should make a part. They are things that no miracles can prove. As soon should I propose to him the belief of Mahomet's journey to the third heavens, and all his conversations with God while a pitcher of water was falling, or the doctrine of transubstantiation, neither of which are more absurd, and both of them are much more innocent.

I am sorry, however, to have occasion to admonish Mr. Gibbon, that he should have distinguished better than he has done between christianity itself, and the corruptions of it. A serious christian strongly attached to some particular tenets, may be excused if, in reading ecclesiastical history, he should not make the proper distinctions; but this allowance cannot be made for so cool and philosophical a spectator as Mr Gibbon.

He should not have taken it for granted, that the doctrine of three persons in one God, or the doctrine of *atonement* for the sins of all mankind, by the death of one man, were any parts of the christian system; when, if he had read the New Testament for himself, he must have seen the doctrine of the proper *unity of God*, and also that of his *free mercy* to the penitent, in

* A common reader might peruse our Lord's discourses many times, before he found any such *topics*, as these with which they are said to be *filled*. But I the less wonder at this, when I find this writer attempting to prove at large, that by *washing the disciples feet* our Lord meant to teach the great doctrine of *atonement by his blood*, and wondering that Grotius and other commentators should not see it in the same light. Sermons, vol. i. p. 177, &c.

But I own I am surprized that he should maintain, vol. iii. p. 67, that “Christ spake by virtue of his own essential right, from himself, and in his own name, as well as by especial appointment of God his Father,” when he himself, in the most unequivocal language repeatedly asserts the contrary; as John v. 30. *I can of my own self do nothing.* Ch. vii. 6. *My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.* Ch. xiv. 10. *The words that I speak to you, I speak not of myself, but the Father, who dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.* It must be a strong bias in favour of a system that can make a person overlook such texts as these. But even the greatest and best of men have been misled in the same way.

almost every page of it. As he does speak of the *corruptions of christianity*, he should have examined farther both as an historian, and as a man; for as an individual, he is as much interested in the inquiry as any other person; and no inquiry whatever is so interesting to any man as this is.

As to what Mr. Gibbon, with a sneer of triumph, says*, of "Plato having 360 years before the christian æra, anticipated one of the most surprizing discoveries of the christian revelation," and of the "theology of Plato having been confirmed with the celestial pen of the last and most sublime of the evangelists, 97 years after that æra;" like all his other sarcasms against christianity, it is founded on ignorance. But he is more excusable in this than in other cases, as too many christians have been chargeable with the same; confounding the *Logos* of Plato with that of John, and making of it a second person in the trinity, than which no two things can be more different, as has been clearly explained by my excellent and judicious friend Mr. Lindsey, especially in his *Catechist*, in the preface to which he has very properly animadverted upon this passage of Mr. Gibbon.

Mr. Gibbon has much to learn concerning the gospel before he can be properly qualified to write against it. Hitherto he seems to have been acquainted with nothing but the corrupt establishments of what is very improperly called christianity; whereas it is incumbent upon him to read and study the New Testament for himself. There he will find nothing like Platonism, but doctrines in every respect the reverse of that system of philosophy, which weak and undistinguishing christians afterwards incorporated with it.

Had Mr. Gibbon lived in France, Spain, or Italy, he might with the same reason have ranked the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the worship of saints and angels among the essentials of christianity, as the doctrines of the trinity and of the atonement.

The friends of genuine, and I will add of rational christianity, have not, however, on the whole, much

* Vol. ii. p. 240, 242.

reason to regret that their enemies have not made these distinctions; since, by this means, we have been taught to make them ourselves; so that christianity is perhaps as much indebted to its enemies, as to its friends, for this important service. In their indiscriminate attacks, whatever has been found to be untenable has been gradually abandoned, and I hope the attack will be continued till nothing of the wretched outworks be left; and then, I doubt not, a safe and impregnable fortress, would be found in the center, a fortress built upon a rock, against which *the gates of death will not prevail*.

When the present crisis is over (and I think we may see that the period is not far distant) that by means of the objections of unbelievers, and the attention which, in consequence of it, will be given to the subject by believers, christianity shall be restored to its primitive purity, the cool and truly sensible part of mankind will, in this very circumstance, perceive an argument for its truth; and thus even the corruptions of christianity will have answered a very valuable purpose; as having been the means of supplying such an evidence of its truth, as could not have been derived from any other circumstance. Let any other religion be named that ever was so much corrupted, and that recovered itself from such corruption, and continued to be professed with unquestionable zeal by men of reflection and understanding, and I shall look upon it with respect, and not reject it without a very particular examination. The revival of a zeal for the religion of Greece and Rome under Julian is not to be compared with the attachment to christianity by inquisitive and learned men in the present age. Let literature and science flourish but one century in Asia, and what would be the state of Mahometanism, the religion of the Hindoos, or that of the Tartars, subject to the the Grand Lama? I should rejoice to hear of such a challenge as I give Mr. Gibbon, being sent from a mahometan Mufti to the christian world.

Should what I call pure christianity (the most essential articles of which I consider to be the proper *unity of God*, and the proper *humanity of Christ*) continue to spread as it now does, and as, from the operation of

the same causes, I have no doubt but that, in spite of all opposition, it will do, and literature revive among the Jews and Mahometans (who, it is remarkable, were never learned and inquisitive, but in an age in which all the christianity they could see must have struck them with horror, as a system of abominable and gross idolatry, to which their own systems are totally repugnant) Should learning and enquiry, I say, once more revive among the Jews and Mahometans, at the same time that a great part of the christian world should be free from that idolatry which has given them such just offence, they would be much more favourably impressed with the idea of christianity than they were in former times.

It also, can hardly be supposed, but that the general conversion of the Jews after a state of such long and violent opposition (which will in all future time exclude the idea of their having acted in concert with the christians) will be followed by the conversion of all the thinking part of the world. And if, before or after this time, the Jews should return to their own country, the whole will be such a manifest fulfilment of the prophecies of scripture, as will leave no reasonable colour for infidelity.

In the prospect of this great and glorious event I rejoice; and I wish to contribute a little towards hastening its approach, both by unfolding the history of christianity, with all the corruptions of it, and submitting to the most rigid examination whatever I think to be really a part of it. To this, all the friends of genuine christianity will chearfully say, AMEN.

THE
GENERAL CONCLUSION.

PART II.

Containing Considerations addressed to the Advocates of the present Civil Establishments of Christianity, and especially BISHOP HURD.

AFTER relating, with so much freedom, the rise, progress, and present state, of what I deem to be *corruptions of christianity*, and especially in the established systems of it, all of which I consider as *antichristian*, being both exceedingly corrupt in their *principles*, and supported by a *power* totally foreign to that of the kingdom of Christ; I cannot help expressing my earnest wishes, that something may be done by those who have influence, to remove these evils, or at least to palliate them. And I cannot help considering those prelates who really have influence in these matters as highly criminal, in this enlightened age, if they are not apprized of the abuses, and if they do not use their endeavours to rectify them.

It will not to be imagined that I have the least prospect of being benefited myself by any alteration that can take place in the ecclesiastical system of my own country. All I wish, as a christian, from the powers of this world, is that they would not intermeddle at all in the business of religion, and that they would give no countenance whatever to any mode of it, my own, or that of others, but shew so much confidence in the principles of what they themselves deem to be true religion, as to think it able to guard itself.

But though I have nothing to ask for myself, much may, and ought to be done for those who do not look quite so far as I do. Many excellent men among the clergy of the church of England are exceedingly distressed with the obligation to subscribe what they can-

not believe, and to recite what they utterly condemn ; and yet their circumstances are such, as too strongly tempt them to make the best of their situation, rather than absolutely starve ; and many others are continually prevented from entering the church by the same state of things in it. Even the guilt of those men who are induced to comply to the disquiet of their consciences will lie, in a great measure, at the door of those who could relieve them, if they were in earnest to do it.

Those who have any principle themselves must feel something for those who find themselves obliged by a principle of conscience absolutely to abandon their preferment in the church. Many and painful must have been their struggles, before they could bring themselves to execute a resolution, which is viewed with wonder and regret by many of their best friends, and with indifference or contempt by the world at large. But they have respect to *other spectators*, at present invisible, but whose approbation will hereafter be of more value than all things else ; and while they are conscious that what they *forsake* in this world is *for the sake of Christ and the gospel* ; Matt. xix. 29. they cannot be unhappy even now. Few of these cases, it is probable, come to the hearing of those whom no such scruples disturb *. But while such is the state of things in this country, and the cry for reformation grows louder every day, *Woe unto them that are thus at ease in our Zion.* Amos, vi. 1.

If I could for a moment wish myself in the situation of those prelates who have influence in the present state of things in this country (but, indeed, I am far from considering their situation as an enviable one, thinking my own, as a Dissenting minister, despicable as I am sensible it must appear to them, to be in reality more useful, more honourable, and more happy) it would be to acquire that immortal renown which it is

* In the course of the last six months only I have heard of five fresh instances of clergymen who, on account of becoming Unitarians, have abandoned either actual preferment, or considerable prospects in the church. It is probable there are others that I have not heard of.

in their power to secure by promoting such a reformation. But the same situation would probably lead me to see things in the same light in which they see them ; and being easy myself, I might feel as little as they do for those who were ill at ease under me.

It is, I am sensible, extremely difficult to put one's self exactly in the place of another person, and therefore it is equally difficult to make proper allowance for the sentiments and conduct of other persons. But if it be a *situation* that necessarily leads any set of men to judge and act wrong, it should be a reason with those who see the influence of that situation, to remove the cause of offence. This work, we may assure ourselves, will be done ; and if those in whose power it now is, be not the proper instruments for it, others will be found, in God's own time, both in Roman Catholic countries, and in this.

The work of reformation is advancing a pace in several Roman catholic countries ; and this will make it doubly reproachful to us, at least, not to *keep* the lead we have hitherto plumed ourselves upon taking, in what relates to *religious liberty*, and to which we must be sensible that we owe much of the honour, and even the flourishing state of our country.

One of the worst symptoms of the present time is, that men of the greatest eminence in the church, and of the most unquestionable ability, appear to be either wholly indifferent to the subject, or, instead of promoting a farther reformation, employ all their ingenuity to make men acquiesce in the present system ; when all they can urge is so palpably weak, that it is barely possible they should be in earnest ; not indeed in their wishes to keep things as they are, but in thinking their arguments have that weight in themselves which they wish them to have with others. To see such men as bishop Hurd in this class of writers, a class so little respectable, when he is qualified to class with Tillotson, Hoadley, and Clarke, equally excites one's pity and indignation.

This truly able writer has all the appearance of being really serious, in alleging that the reformers of the church of England were "as well qualified to judge

“concerning the system of christianity as we now are,”
 “They had only,” he says *, “to copy, or rather to
 “inspect the holy scriptures, which lay open to them
 “as they do to us;” as if it required nothing more
 than eyes, capable of distinguishing the words of scrip-
 ture, to enter into their real meaning. But had not
 the Papists, the Lutherans, the Calvinists, the Anabap-
 tists, and the Socinians, of the same age, eyes, as well
 as the reformers of the church of England? And, I
 may add, were they not men of as good understanding?

But he adds †, “the scriptures were taken by them
 “for their sole rule of faith; and therefore what should
 “hinder them, when they read those scriptures, from
 “seeing as distinctly as we do at this day?” I answer,
 the same thing, whatever it is, that makes men interpret
 the scriptures so differently from the truth at this day.
 Was that an age exempt from *prejudice*; or were the
 reformers in England the only persons so privileged?
 All the classes of reformers above enumerated appealed
 to the scriptures alike.

However, it is far from being true that the English
 reformers, whatever they might *pretend*, were deter-
 mined by the authority of scripture only. It is evi-
 dent to most persons, though it may not be so to bishop
 Hurd, that they were much influenced by the doctrines
 of the second, the third, and even later centuries.
 What else could have led them to adopt the Nicene,
 and especially the Athanasian creed? This was going
 far beyond the canon of the scriptures. Or should
 the English reformers have seriously proposed to them-
 selves to make the scriptures their only rule, how was
 it possible for them, educated as they were, in the com-
 plicated system of popery, to read them with unpreju-
 diced eyes?

But “the reformation,” he says ‡, “was not carried
 “on with us in a precipitate, tumultuous manner,
 “as it was for the most part on the continent.
 “On the other hand, it advanced under the eye of the
 “magistrate, by slow degrees. Nay it was more than
 “once checked and kept back by him. Hence it came

* Sermons, vol. i. p. 235. † Ib. ‡ Ib. p. 240.

“to pass, that there was time allowed for taking the
“full benefit of all the discoveries made abroad, and
“for studying the chief points of controversy with
“care. In fact, between the first contentions in Ger-
“many on account of religion, and the final settlement
“of the church of England under queen Elizabeth,
“there was a space of near half a century.”

It is obvious to remark, that the very same encomium might have been bestowed upon the church of England, if it had been fixed in any of the different periods, in which it was *fixed* (and which is here called being *checked* and *kept back*) by one prince, or advanced by another, as well as where it was *checked* and *kept back* (for this bishop Hurd cannot deny to have been the case) by queen Elizabeth. It would also have been equally applicable to any different establishment that should have been made after the reformation had been moving on a *complete half century*, as well as *nearly one*, or if it had gone on afterwards (still under the controuling eye of the magistrate) to this day. For why should not our present civil governors be as good judges in matters of religion, as any persons in the same situations could have been two hundred years ago? Just so much more time has elapsed since “the first
“contentions in Germany on account of religion,” and consequently more time would have been allowed for taking the full benefit of all the discoveries that have been made both at home and abroad, &c. And it cannot be doubted but that if a new establishment should be made at this day, it would be, in many respects, considerably different from the present.

On the other hand, had all our sovereigns after queen Mary been papists, and the reformation never been resumed, a present bishop of Worcester might have said that the experiment had been tried, and had not answered, and that what had been established by the wisdom of ages, in all the countries of Europe, it could not be safe to alter. Besides, what can a christian, jealous for the purity of his religion, expect from the *controlling eye of the magistrate*, but such a modification of it, or something bearing its name, as should be thought to be most subservient to his own interest.

It does not require the understanding of bishop Hurd to see the full force of this reply; but it may require a mind less fascinated by prejudice in favour of long-established forms.

In one respect this learned prelate acknowledges * that the English reformers were "not sufficiently enlightened," and that was with respect to the doctrine of *toleration*. But he says †, "no peculiar charge of ignorance can be brought against the reformers for misapprehending a subject not only difficult in itself, but perplexed with endless prejudices." But surely bishop Hurd himself will not say, that the doctrine of *toleration* is more difficult in itself, or more perplexed with prejudices, than the doctrine of the *trinity*.

In another case, also, if he be at all ingenuous, he must acknowledge that the English reformers did not see quite so clearly as he himself now does. He says ‡, "the christian system has been reviled by such as have seen it through the false medium of popish or Calvinistic ideas." Calvinism, therefore, according to him, is not true christianity. But let any competent judge of the subject, read the *thirty-nine articles*, of the church of England, and say whether they have not a strong tinge of Calvinism.

It is not merely from such a general expression as that above quoted, that I conclude bishop Hurd is no friend of Calvinism. He directly contradicts the fundamental article of that system when he says §, that "a divine person," &c. "in virtue of his all atoning death, has opened the gates of eternal life to the whole race of mortal man."

According to the plainest sense of the articles of the church of England, the gates of eternal life are not open to the *whole race of mortal men*; but only to those who "by the everlasting purpose of God, before the foundations of the world were laid, being chosen in Christ out of mankind, are decreed by his council, secret to us, and are delivered from curse and damnation ||." It must be a strange *latitude of inter-*

* Sermons, vol. i. p. 24.

† Ib.

‡ Ib. p. 37.

§ Ib. vol. iii. p. 63.

|| Article xvii.

Interpretation (for which his lordship is an advocate) that can reconcile these two contrary positions; and yet in the preface to these articles it is said, "that they were agreed upon for avoiding diversity of opinions, and establishing consent touching true religion." Let Mr. Madan, Dr. Hurd, and the excellent bishop of Carlisle, together with some unbelievers among the clergy, all subscribers to the same articles, confer together, and tell us what this *consent touching true religion* is.

What reformation can we expect in any important doctrinal articles of religion, when bishop Hurd expresses himself so strongly as we have seen, in favour of the *divinity of Christ, in the highest sense of the word*; by which he must mean that he is fully equal, in power and glory to the Father, whom Christ himself styles *his Father and our Father; his God and our God*. It was a long time, as I have shewn, before any christians, after they contended that Christ was God, had any idea of his being so, except in some qualified sense. I will venture to say that no person before, or at the council of Nice, would have used such language as this of bishop Hurd.

With respect to the doctrine of *atonement*, which I think I have proved to be quite a modern thing, and hardly to have been known before the reformation, bishop Hurd says *, "The scriptures are unintelligible, and language itself has no meaning, if the *blood of the Lamb slain* has not a true, direct, and proper efficacy, considered in the literal sense of *blood*, in freeing us from the guilt of sin, or in other words from the punishment of it."

It is impossible, however, not to observe, that the papists use the same language in defence of the doctrine of *transubstantiation*, appealing also to the literal sense of more texts of scripture than one. Besides, how is it possible that the *blood* of any man (and the *divinity* of Christ certainly had no *blood*) considered in a *literal sense*, should cleanse from sin. Surely there must be something figurative in such language as this; and

* Sermons, vol. i. p. 193.

why should the figurative sense end just where bishop Hurd would fix it, rather than where Socinus would choose?

Nay, it should seem that, according to bishop Hurd, our salvation depends upon the *belief* of this novel doctrine of atonement. For I can see no other natural interpretation of what he says*, “They must place
“their entire hope and confidence in the blood of the
“covenant, who would share in the blessings of it.” If this is to be understood according to the literal sense of the words, all the heathen world are excluded from salvation, as well as Socinians.

To me it appears extraordinary, that a man of bishop Hurd’s good sense should not be more staggered than he appears to have been, at the very manner in which he himself describes the doctrines of the *divinity of Christ*, and of *atonement for sin by his death*, every sentence, and every clause of a sentence, being calculated to excite astonishment; but I shall only transcribe a part of it. After describing the gradual unfolding of the scheme under the Jewish dispensation, he says, “At length Jesus Christ came into the world,
“to fulfil and to declare the whole will of God on this
“interesting subject; and from him, and those com-
“missioned by him, we learn what the wisest men, and
“even *angels had desired to look into*, and could at most
“discern but imperfectly, through the types and sha-
“dows of the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations.”

“The great mystery, now unveiled, was briefly this,
“that God would only confer this mighty privilege
“at the instance, as it were, and for the sake of a
“transcendently divine person, his only begotten son,
“the second person in the glorious trinity, as we now
“style him; that this divine person should descend
“from heaven, should become incarnate, should even
“pour out his blood unto death, and by that blood
“should wash away the stain of guilt. In this awful-
“ly stupendous manner, at which reason stands aghast
“and faith herself is half confounded, was the grace
“of God to man at length manifested †.”

* Sermons, vol. i. p. 194.

† Ib. vol. ii. p. 285, &c.

The natural effect of such a pause of astonishment as this, should be a close examination, whether a thing that even supernatural evidence can barely make credible, did ever take place; for in all cases, the more extraordinary any *thing*, any *event*, or any *proposition*, is, the more evidence it requires. And when we consider the true meaning of the figurative language of scripture, it will be found to assert nothing on this subject at which even reason can stand aghast.

Our author himself, after enumerating * the strongest figurative expressions of the scriptures on this subject, as those in which the terms *redemption*, *ransom*, *propitiation*, *sacrifice*, &c. occur, closes the whole with this observation. "Now let men use what art they will in torturing such expressions as these, they will hardly prevent our seeing what the plain doctrine of scripture is, viz. That it pleased God to give us eternal life only in his Son, and in his Son only as suffering and dying for us." All this I readily admit, believing as firmly as bishop Hurd can do, that it was expedient, and necessary, that such a person as Jesus Christ, should preach as he did, and that he should die, and rise again, or the end of the gospel, in forming men to a happy immortality, could not have been gained. This is certainly the doctrine of the New Testament, but then it was far from being the doctrine of *atonement*; which I think I have shewn to be a very different thing from that which was taught by Christ and the apostles, and indeed to have been unknown for several centuries after Christ.

It is no wonder that this writer should say† that "no christian is bound to a solicitous enquiry into the doctrinal parts of the gospel; and that very possibly his conduct is then most acceptable, when he looks no farther than to the authority of the gospel, agreeable to the known decision of our Saviour himself, *Blessed is he who hath not seen and yet hath believed*." For certainly such tenets as those above cited can never be believed on any other terms. Faith in them must be implicit, and without enquiry. It is

* Sermons, vol. ii. p. 288.

† Ib. vol. iii. p. 52.

rather extraordinary, however, that this writer did not perceive that the saying which he quotes of our Saviour relates only to a *matter of fact*, of which it was not possible that more than a very few persons could be eye witnesses; whereas the things that he is contending for are *doctrines* of which all persons at this day are competent judges, provided they make use of their reason, and examine the scriptures for themselves. But even the looking no farther than to the *authority of the gospel* for articles of faith, may make a very *solicitous enquiry* absolutely necessary, considering how much and how long, some articles of faith have been misrepresented.

In fact, if the learned prelate could fancy himself out of the fetters of his church's creed, he might find the very articles which he so zealously contends for among the "quibbles and metaphysics, which" (with a strain of pleasantry not usual to him, and indeed rather uncommon in a sermon) he says *, "the pagan philosophers, when they pressed into the church, in their haste forgot to leave behind them."

But however these doctrines came in, to repeat the bishops own words †, "the presumptuous decisions of particular men, or churches, are forwardly taken for the genuine doctrines of christianity; and these positions being not unfrequently either wholly unintelligible, or even contrary to the plainest reason, the charge of nonsense, or of falsehood, is thus dextrously transferred to the gospel itself." This very just, and well expressed observation, I cannot help thinking to be peculiarly applicable to several articles of the creed of bishop Hurd himself, as I think must be sufficiently evident from the preceding history.

This writer not content with what he himself had advanced against all improvements, or alterations, in the church in which he presides, quotes with the highest approbation what Mr. Burgh in his reply to Mr. Lindsey, says against the idea of a *progressive religion*; viz. that "All that the bible contains was as perspicuous to those who first perused it, after the rejection of the papal yoke, as it can be to us now, or as it can be to our posterity in the fiftieth generation *."

* Sermons, vol. iii. p. 205.

† Ib. p. 209.

This is evidently a mis-stating of the case ; because it is not a *progressive religion*; but a *progressive reformation* of a corrupted religion that is pleaded for. And as it cannot be denied that the corruption of christianity was a gradual and progressive thing, can it be so very unnatural to expect that the restoration of it to its primitive purity should be gradual and progressive also? If the reformation was not progressive, why does not this bishop prefer the state of it under John Hus and Jerom of Prague to that of Luther and Cranmer? He may say that they had not then completely *rejected the papal yoke*. But if by papal yoke he meant all the corruptions of christianity contained in the system of popery, and which had been enforced by the authority of the see of Rome, I say, that neither Luther nor Cranmer rejected the papal yoke ; because their reformations were partial.

Besides if we make the sentiments of the divines of that particular age which Mr. Burgh and bishop Hurd may call the proper *era of the reformation*, to be our standard, why should we adopt those of Luther or Cranmer; in preference to those of Socinus, or even those of the Anabaptists of Munster, who were all of the same age? I know of no reason but that the opinions of Luther and Cranmer had the sanction of the *civil powers*, which those of Socinus, and others of the same age, and who were equally well qualified to judge for themselves, had not.

It is nothing but the *alliance* of the kingdom of Christ with the kingdoms of this world (an alliance which our Lord himself expressly disclaimed) that supports the grossest corruptions of christianity ; and perhaps we must wait for the fall of the civil powers before this most unnatural alliance be broken. Calamitous, no doubt, will that time be. But what convulsion in the political world ought to be a subject of lamentation, if it be attended with so desirable an event. May the *kingdom of God*, and of Christ (that which I conceive to be intended in the Lord's prayer) truly and fully *come*, though all the kingdoms of the world be removed in order to make way for it !

* Sermons, vol. i. p. 244.

B. b 2.

APPENDIX.

Containing a Summary View of the Evidence for the primitive Christians holding the Doctrine of the simple Humanity of Christ.

As the doctrine held by the primitive church, and especially by Jewish christians, is of particular consequence, it may give satisfaction to some of my readers, to see the evidence for their holding the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ, stated in a more concise and distinct manner than it is done in the body of this work. I shall, therefore, attempt it in this place, and take the opportunity of introducing a few more circumstances relating to it.

1. It is acknowledged by early writers of the orthodox persuasion, that two kinds of heresy existed in the times of the apostles, viz. that of those who held that Christ was *simply a man*, and the other that he was *man only in appearance*. Now the apostle John animadverts with the greatest severity upon the latter; and can it be thought probable that he should pass over the former without censure, if he had thought it to be an error?

2. Athanasius is so far from denying this, that he endeavours to account for Christ being spoken of as a man only in several parts of the New Testament, and especially in the book of Acts, from the apostles not being willing to offend the Jews (meaning the Jewish christians) of those times, and that they might bring them to the belief of the divinity of Christ by degrees. He adds that the Jews being in this error (which he states as their believing Christ to be *ψιλος ανθρωπος*) drew the Gentiles into it also.

3. It is acknowledged by Eusebius and others, that the ancient unitarians themselves constantly asserted that their doctrine was the universal opinion of the christian church till the time of Victor.

4. Hegesippus, the first christian historian, himself a Jew, enumerating the heresies of his time, mentions several of the Gnostic kind, but not that of Christ being a mere man. He moreover says that, in travelling to Rome, where he arrived in the time of Anicetus, he found all the churches that he visited held the faith which had been taught by Christ and the apostles.

5. Justin Martyr, who maintains the pre-existence of Christ, is so far from calling the contrary opinion a *heresy*, that what he says on the subject is evidently an apology for his own. As Hegesippus was cotemporary with Justin, he must have heard at least of the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ, but he might not have heard much about the opinion of Justin, which was different from that of the Gnostics, though the pre-existence of Christ was a part of both.

6. Irenæus, who wrote after Justin, only calls the opinion of those who held that Christ was the son of Joseph as well as of Mary, a *heresy*. He says nothing of those who, believing him to be a mere man, allowed that he had no human father.

7. Those whom Epiphanius calls *Alogi*, among the Gentiles, held that Christ was merely a man; and as they had no peculiar appellation before his time, and had no separate assemblies, it is evident they could not have been distinguished as heretics in early times.

8. The first who held, and discussed, the doctrine of the divinity of Christ acknowledged that their opinion was exceedingly unpopular with the *unlearned* christians, and that these latter were pious persons, who dreaded the doctrine of the trinity, as thinking that it infringed upon that of the supremacy of God the Father.

9. The divinity of Christ was first advanced and urged by those who had been heathen philosophers, and especially those who were admirers of the doctrine of Plato, who held the opinion of a *second God*. Austin says *, that he considered Christ as no other than a most excellent man, and had no suspicion of the *word of God* being incarnate in him, or how, "the catholic faith

* Confessiones, Lib. vii. Cap. xix. &c.

“ differed from the error of Photinus” (the last of the proper unitarians whose name is come down to us) till he read the books of Plato; and that he was afterwards confirmed in his opinions by reading the scriptures. Constantine in his oration to the Fathers of the council of Nice*, speaks with commendation of Plato; as having taught the doctrine of “ a second God, derived from the supreme God, and subservient to “ his will.”

10. There is a pretty easy gradation in the progress of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ; as he was first thought to be a God in some qualified sense of the word, a distinguished emanation from the supreme mind, and then the *logos* or wisdom of God personified; and it was not till near four hundred years after Christ that he was thought to be properly *equal to the Father*. Whereas, on the other hand, it is now pretended, that the apostles taught the doctrine of the proper divinity of Christ, and yet it cannot be denied that in the very times of the apostles, the Jewish church and many of the Gentiles, held the opinion of his being a *mere man*. Here the transition is quite sudden, without any gradation at all. This must naturally have given the greatest alarm, such as is now given to those who are called *orthodox*, by the present Socinians; and yet nothing of this kind can be perceived. Besides, it was certainly more probable that the christians of those times, urged as they were with the meanness of their master, should incline to *add to*, rather than *take from*, his natural rank and dignity.

* Cap. ix. p. 684.

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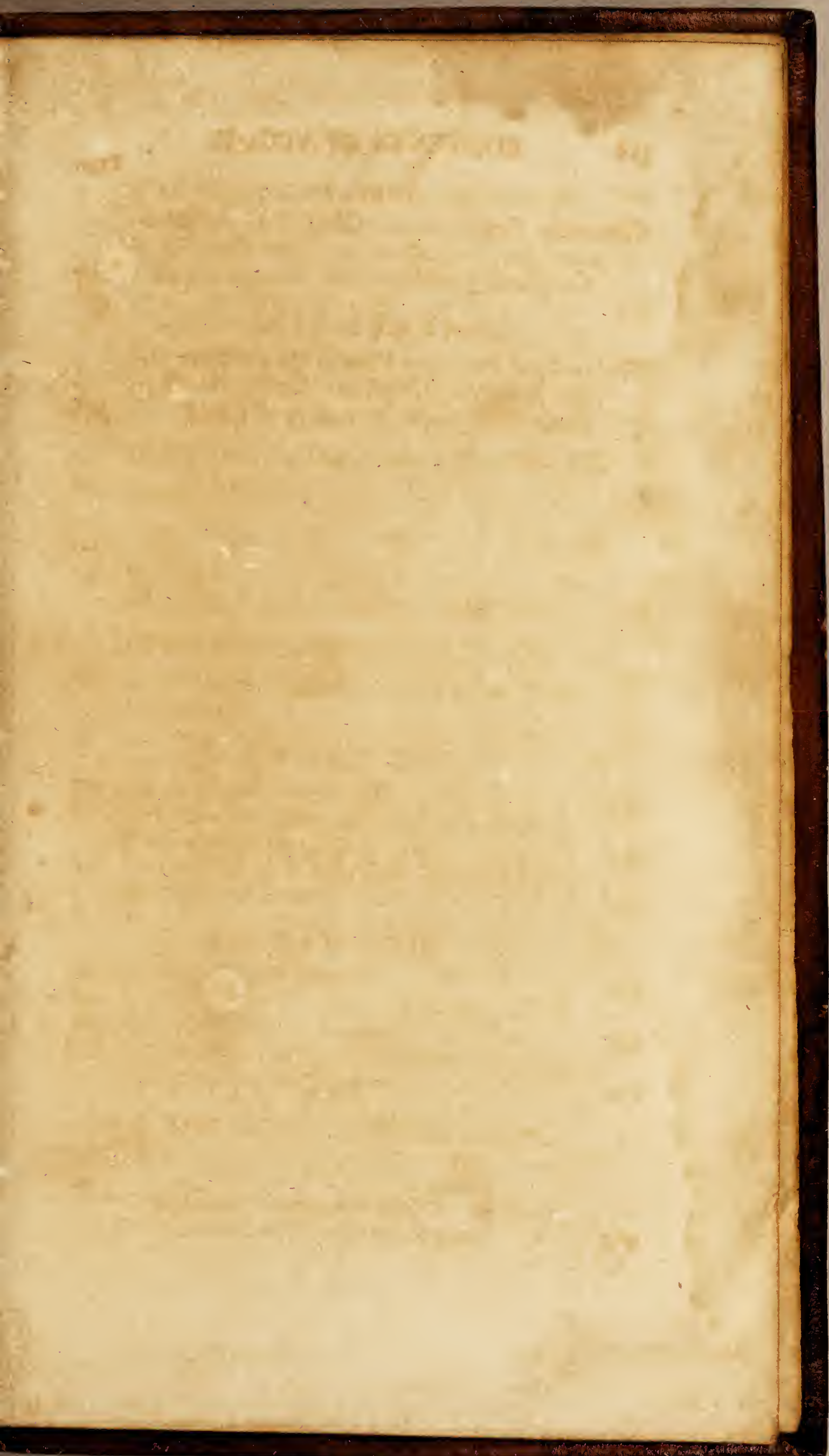
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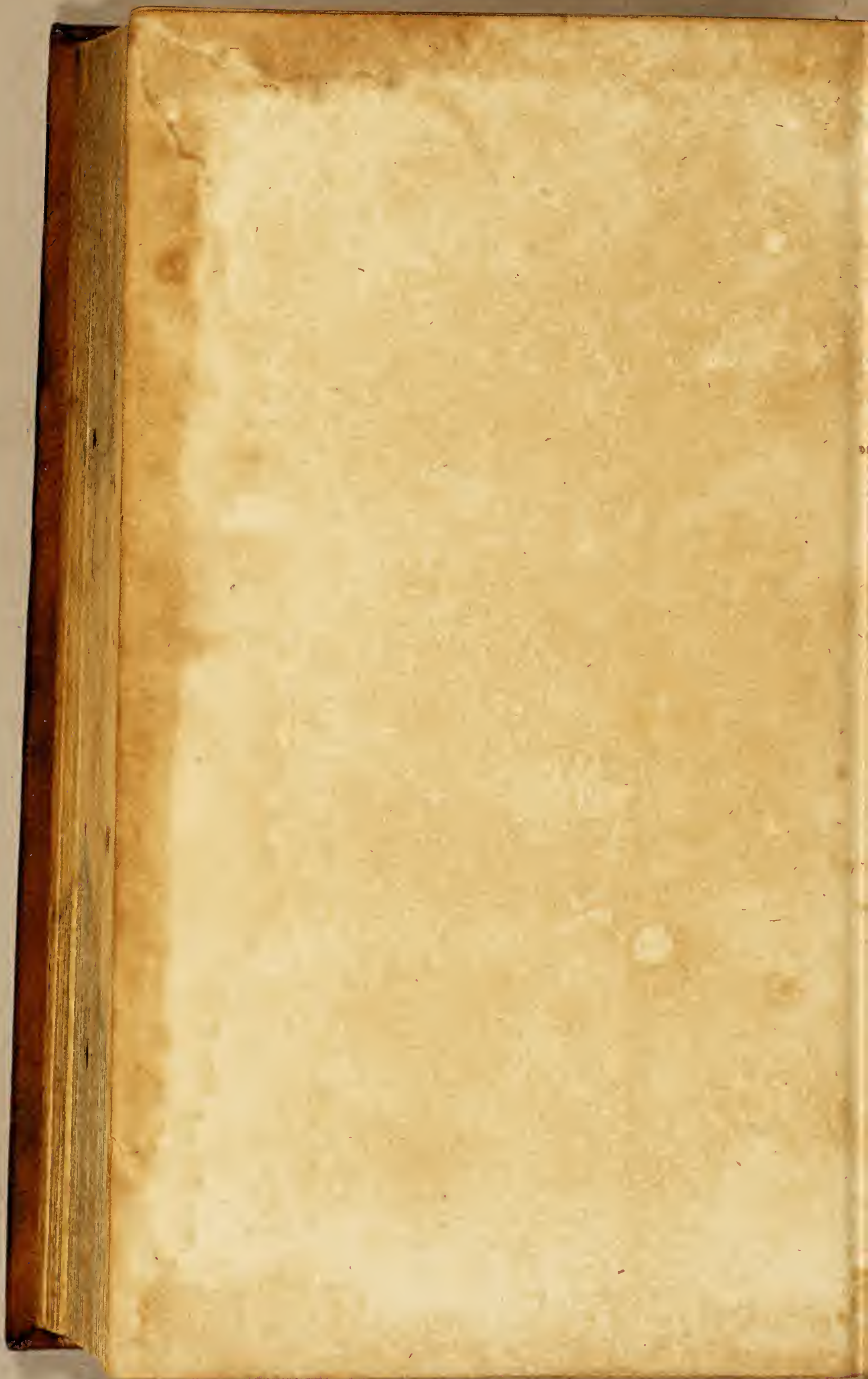
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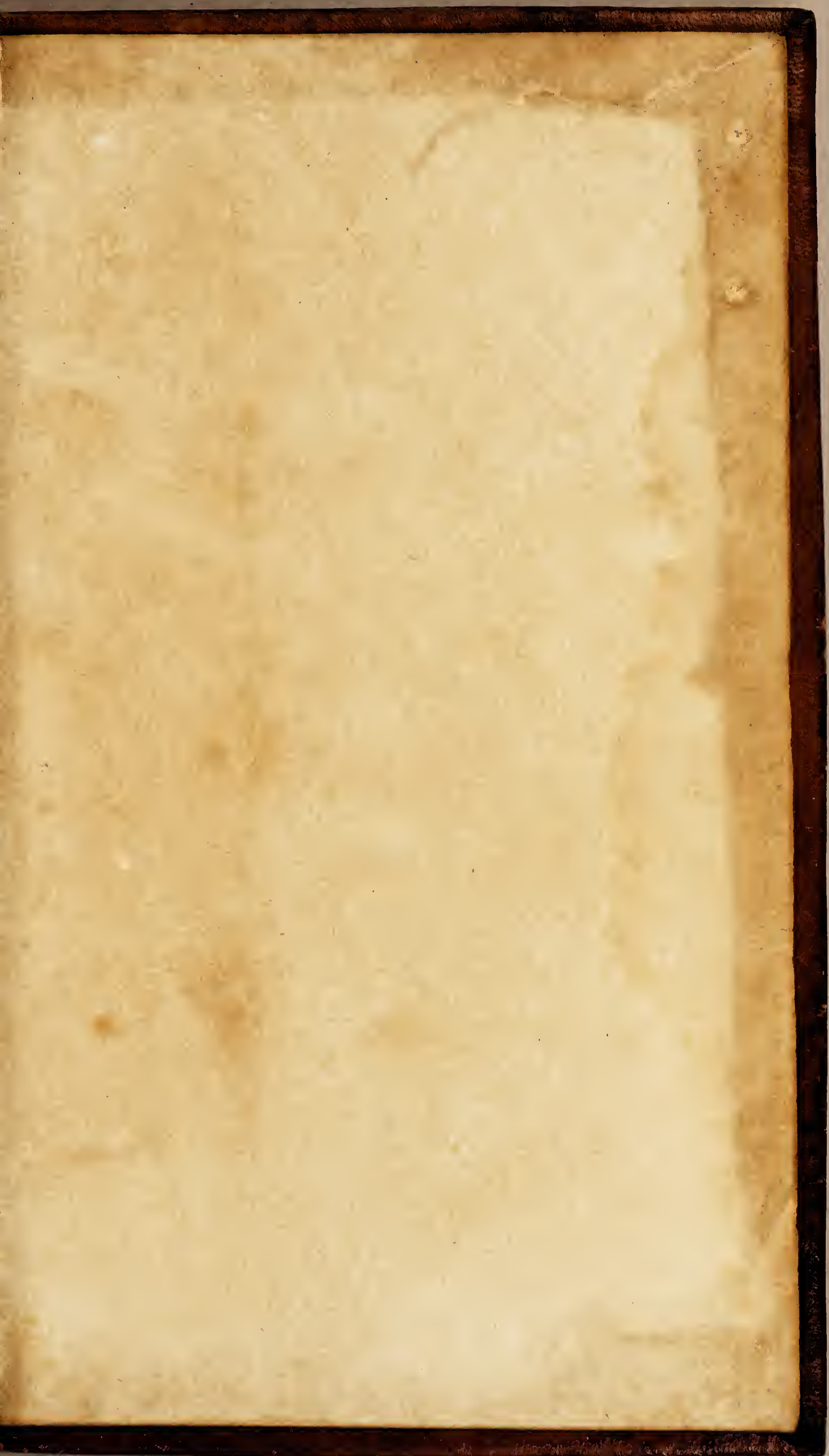
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